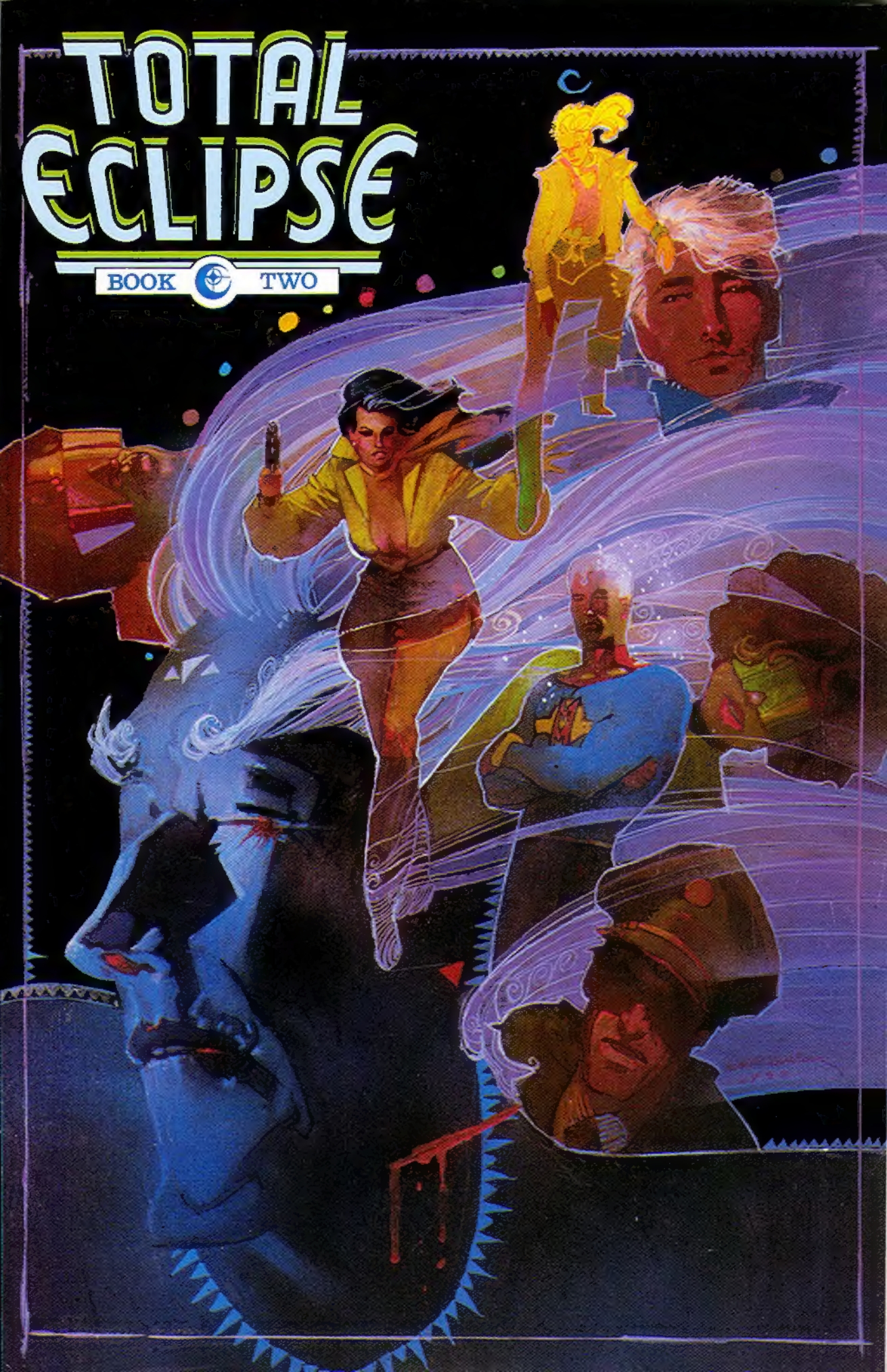
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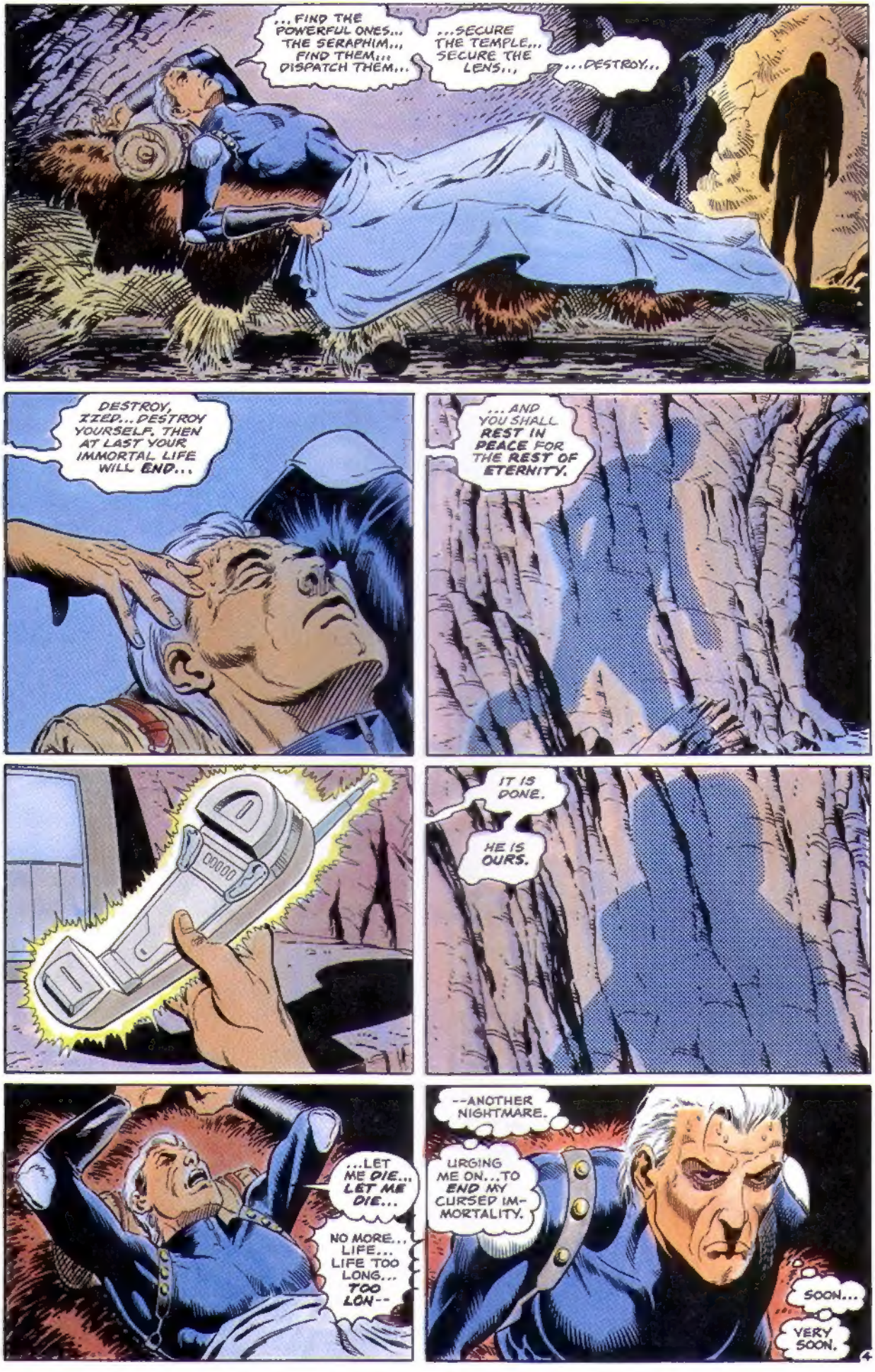
...I'M FEELING BETTER, I JUST WISH I COULD BE OUT THERE HELPING YOU FIND THE...
BALTIMORE GENERAL HOSPITAL
...THE THINGS THAT DID THIS TO ME.
BUT UNTIL I'M OFF THESE DAMNED CRUTCHES, I FEEL USELESS.
NO MORE USELESS THAN US, HOLLY.
WE KNOW YOU WERE ATTACKED BY SOMETHING PROBABLY NOT HUMAN.
AND WE KNOW THEY DUPLICATED YOUR LOOKS TO GET THROUGH NELSON AVIATION TO STEAL OUR PROTOTYPE JETS.
BUT WE DON'T KNOW WHO... WE DON'T KNOW WHY.
WELL, I'LL LET YOU GUYS FIGURE IT OUT.
THIS ISN'T MY FIGHT.
IT'S EVERYONE'S FIGHT, UPSTART.
NOW, SIT DOWN AND LISTEN.
WE'VE GOT TO DRAFT PLANS.
IT'S LEO-WHAT'S-HIS-NAME--THE PROWLER. HOLY HELL--YOU'RE STILL ALIVE?
YOU CAME, LEO? I--I DIDN'T THINK YOU WOULD.
I SWEAR, BOY, YOU'LL BE THE DEATH OF ME.
I WARNED YOU NOT TO LEAVE ME, BUT YOU DIDN'T LISTEN.
AWW, LEO, I WAS JUST--
SGT. STRIKE? IT'S BEEN QUITE A WHILE.
I'VE BEEN AWAY.
YOU SEEM NO OLDER.
BUT LET US ALL HOPE YOU ARE AT LEAST WISER.

FROM WHAT I'VE SEEN, WE HAVE OUR WORK CUT OUT FOR US.
HEY, SOMEONE GIMME A CLUE-- WHO IS THIS SCARY-LOOKIN' MOTHER?
I TOLD YOU BEFORE-- SIT DOWN AND SHUT UP.
DON'T MAKE ME REPEAT MYSELF.
UHH... SURE... OKAY.
WH-WHATEVER YOU SAY.
I'VE HEARD OF YOU. YOUR MOVIES PLAYED IN GERMANY BEFORE I... LEFT.
AND YOU ARE NO OLDER THAN THE NEWSREELS I SAW OF YOU AT THE TIME. WHAT IS IT WITH YOU AND SGT. STRIKE? DO YOU OWE ROYALTIES TO PONCE DE LEON?
YOU KNOW THIS GUY, SKY?
YEAH, AN' YOUR DAD KNEW HIM, TOO.
HE WAS ALWAYS AN ARROGANT SOB, BUT HE SHOOTS STRAIGHT.
...IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE.
HMPH! NOISY HEROES OF LIGHT! ALL YOU WANT TO DO IS SIT HERE JABBERING LIKE FOOLS! LET US FIND WHAT IS WRONG.

YOU WASTE TIME, IMMORTAL... AND TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE.
TIME IS EVERYTHING.
IZED, YOU WILL NEED NEW RECRUITS...
YOU WANT TO DIE, IZED, AND TO DIE--
--YOU MUST DESTROY EVERYTHING...

NIGHTMARES
THEY EXIST OUT THERE, IMMORTAL... THE NEW RECRUITS...
...WITH POWERS... GREAT POWERS... TO SECURE THE TEMPLE, IZED...
... TO POSSESS THE LENS...
...TO DESTROY THE UNIVERSE...
...TO DESTROY YOURSELF..
TO DESTROY MYSELF... TO DESTROY MYSELF... TO DESTROY MYSELF...
Hampton Blyberg '88


...FIND THE POWERFUL ONES... THE SERAPHIM... FIND THEM... DISPATCH THEM...
...SECURE THE TEMPLE... SECURE THE LENS...
...DESTROY...
DESTROY, IZZD... DESTROY YOURSELF. THEN AT LAST YOUR IMMORTAL LIFE WILL END...
...AND YOU SHALL REST IN PEACE FOR THE REST OF ETERNITY.
IT IS DONE.
HE IS OURS.
...LET ME DIE... LET ME DIE...
NO MORE... LIFE... LIFE TOO LONG... TOO LON--
--ANOTHER NIGHTMARE.
URGING ME ON...TO END MY CURSED IM-MORTALITY.
SOON...
VERY SOON.

THE ONES CALLED THE NEW WAVE HANDLE THEMSELVES WELL AGAINST THAT... THING.
BUT WHAT IS IT?

IT APPEARS THAT ALL IS PROCEEDING ACCORDING TO PLAN.
BUT THEN I HAD PLENTY OF TIME TO MAKE CERTAIN IT WOULD.

WHERE DO THESE MONSTERS COME FROM? I SENSE SO MANY... DISTURBANCES THAT DEFY EVEN MY LOGIC.
AND ANYTHING I DO NOT UNDERSTAND...
...CONCERNS ME GREATLY.

FOR ALL HIS KNOWLEDGE AND ALL HIS BRILLIANCE, ZZED IS QUITE THE FOOL.
SO PROCEED, IMMORTAL--

THIS IS BEYOND ZZED'S DOING.
HIS EONS ON EARTH DO NOT GRANT THE POWER TO SUMMON THE CREATURES OF NIGHTMARE.

--TIME WILL TELL THE VICTOR.

THE DIE IS CAST.
THIS WORLD SHALL MEET ITS END.
AND THE GAME, AS ALWAYS, PLAYS ON.

DUTCHMAN, COME. I HAVE NEED OF YOU.
WHAT TRANSPIRES HERE REQUIRES ME TO SEEK THE ASSISTANCE OF THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN MY ENEMIES.

AS THEY HAVE NEVER BELIEVED MY DESTINY IS TO RULE, THEY MOST CERTAINLY WOULD NEVER BELIEVE MY... SINCERITY IN THIS MATTER.
BUT YOU, DUTCHMAN--

--YOU WERE ONCE ONE OF THEM.
IF YOU ATTAIN PROOF FOR ME OF ZZED'S VILE PLANS...

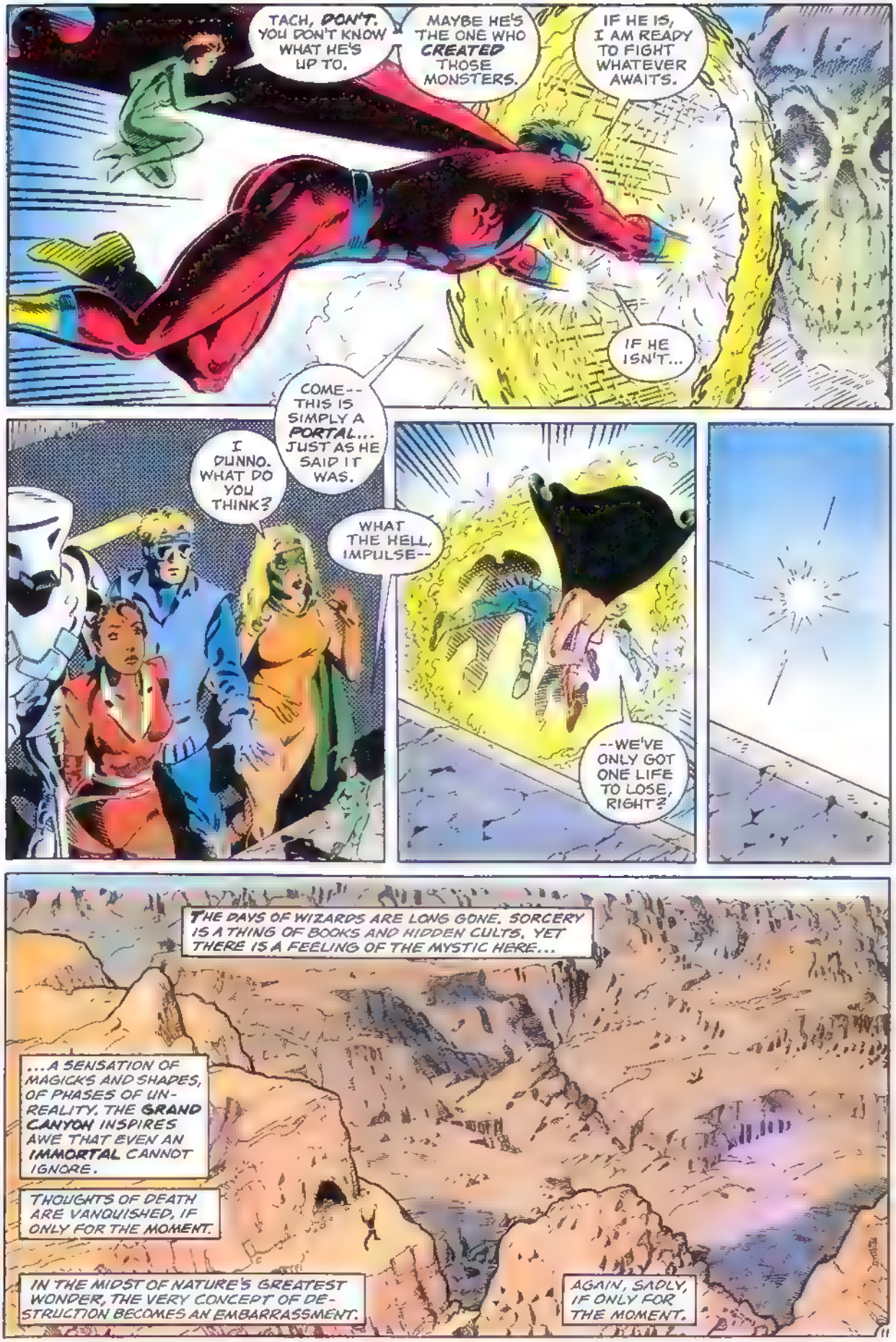
...I MIGHT CONVINCE NELSON AND THE OTHERS OF OUR NEED TO WORK TOGETHER IN DEFEATING THIS ARROGANT FOE.
GO NOW, DUTCHMAN.
DO AS YOU HAVE BEEN INSTRUCTED.

NELSON MUST BELIEVE THIS PLANET'S VERY EXISTENCE FORCES OUR ALLIANCE IN THIS AFFAIR.
THE DUTCHMAN WILL DO AS I DEMAND. WHAT OTHER CHOICE HAS HE?
I KNEW IT WAS PRUDENT TO BRING HIM HERE ABOARD THE AIRTOMB THAT NIGHT HE FIRST PERISHED.
EVEN THE DAMNED HAVE NEED OF HEROES.
IT IS TIME ALL MY WARRIORS MET.
AND, SHOULD THEY PERISH IN ACHIEVING MY NEEDS, SO BE IT. THEY ARE MERELY TOOLS TO BE DISPOSED OF ONCE THEY ARE NO LONGER USEFUL.
ZZED'S SCHEME MUST BE ENDED, FOR THERE MUST ALWAYS BE MISERY.

SOHO. ONCE IT WAS AFFORDABLE HERE. ONCE THERE WERE ARTISTS WHOSE DREAMS EXCEEDED THEIR SALES.
ONCE THE CLUBS WERE PLACES TO MEET AND TALK FOR HOURS.
BUT THEN IT BECAME TRENDY. THEN IT BECAME EXPENSIVE.
SERAPH!
DID YOU WANT SOMETHING?
I BELIEVE WE HAVE MUTUAL NEEDS, SERAPH. PERHAPS WE SHOULD... TALK.
I HARDLY THINK SO. WHAT OF YOURS COULD CONCERN ME?
SERAPHIM OBJECTIVES, FOR ONE.
JACK, C'MON, HE'S CRAZY. WE CAME HERE TO DANCE.
BUT... JACK...
GO AWAY.
YOU'RE BOTHERING ME. GO AWAY.
MAN, YOU THINK YOU'RE SO MUCH BETTER THAN EVERYBODY ELSE!
HADN'T YOU REALIZED-- I AM!
MY PATIENCE IS LIMITED! YOU HAVE ONE MINUTE.

BAYONNE, NEW JERSEY, AND THE AFTERMATH OF HELL.
WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT WE FOUGHT?
I MEAN, MUTANT CRABS AND LOBSTERS--I KNEW JERSEY WAS POLLUTED, BUT THAT'S RIDICULOUS.
ALL'S CLEAR-- NOTHING DOWN THERE BUT OLD TIRES AND CONCRETE-BOOTED GANGSTERS.
TRASH
RULES
DOT'S RIGHT. WHATEVER WAS DOWN THERE IS GONE.
AVALON... IS THIS MAGICAL IN NATURE?
NO, I DIDN'T SENSE ANY MAGIC INVOLVED, BUT WHAT ELSE COULD IT HAVE BEEN?
LOOK, WHATEVER IT IS, IT'S BEYOND US.
I KNOW... AND I THINK WE NEED HELP.

HELP? FROM WHOM?
OTHERS LIKE US...
...I TOLD YOU ABOUT AIRBOY AND VALKYRIE.
THEY MAY NOT HAVE POWERS LIKE YOU OR AVALON, BUT IN A FIGHT, I'D DEFINITELY WANT THEM ON OUR SIDE.
YOU WISH TO MEET OTHERS? THEN HEED MY WORDS.
FOLLOW ME AND I WILL TAKE YOU TO THEM.
WAIT A MINUTE. I DON'T NORMALLY BELIEVE EVERY ROTTED SKELETON WHO TELLS ME WHAT TO DO.
THIS ISN'T SOME STUPID FRIDAY THE THIRTEENTH MOVIE--
--AND I'M NOT SOME OVERLY HORMONAL TEENAGER!
YOU SPOKE OF THE ONE CALLED AIRBOY...
...BELIEVE ME WHEN I SAY WE HAVE KNOWN EACH OTHER FOR...AGES.
NOW COME THROUGH THE PORTAL.
H-HE JUST OPENED UP A HOLE IN THE AIR.
WE NEED HELP. I BELIEVE WE SHOULD TRY.
I SHOULD TRY.


TACH, DON'T. YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT HE'S UP TO.
MAYBE HE'S THE ONE WHO CREATED THOSE MONSTERS.
IF HE IS, I AM READY TO FIGHT WHATEVER AWAITS.
IF HE ISN'T...
COME-- THIS IS SIMPLY A PORTAL... JUST AS HE SAID IT WAS.
I DUNNO. WHAT DO YOU THINK?
WHAT THE HELL, IMPULSE--
--WE'VE ONLY GOT ONE LIFE TO LOSE, RIGHT?
THE DAYS OF WIZARDS ARE LONG GONE. SORCERY IS A THING OF BOOKS AND HIDDEN CULTS, YET THERE IS A FEELING OF THE MYSTIC HERE...
...A SENSATION OF MAGICKS AND SHADES, OF PHASES OF UN-REALITY. THE GRAND CANYON INSPIRES AWE THAT EVEN AN IMMORTAL CANNOT IGNORE.
THOUGHTS OF DEATH ARE VANQUISHED, IF ONLY FOR THE MOMENT.
IN THE MIDST OF NATURE'S GREATEST WONDER, THE VERY CONCEPT OF DE-STRUCTION BECOMES AN EMBARRASSMENT.
AGAIN, SADLY, IF ONLY FOR THE MOMENT.

THE CANYON INSPIRES PEACE. IT FORCES UPON THE SOUL THE SENSE OF TRANQUILITY.
THIS IS NO PLACE FOR WAR.
BUT THESE OUTCROPPINGS OF SILT AND LIMESTONE, OF SANDSTONE AND SHALE, BLACK VISHNU SCHISTS, GNEISS AND ARCHEAN PINK GRANITE HAVE SEEN MANY WARS BEFORE.
THERE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A BATTLE HERE AGAINST UNYIELDING TIME.
THE CANYON IS A BOOK OF AGES, RESTING HORIZONTAL, AND THE BATTLES ARE RECORDED ON PAGES OF SEDIMENT IN FOSSILIZED TYPE.
ZZED BREATHES THE QUICK, KEEN AIR AND REFUSES TO RELISH ITS SWEET TASTE.
THE VOICES AGAIN WORM THROUGH HIS THOUGHTS, AND TRANQUILITY SHATTERS.
HE NEEDS MATERIALS TO COMPLETE HIS WORK. HE WILL LEAD HIS DEVIL-WINGS IN SEARCH. HE TAKES ON A COMMANDER'S STANCE. HE LETS HIS EYES NARROW AND FOCUS.
HE HAS HIS FUTURE TO WORRY OVER.
YET, FOR ONE BRIEF MOMENT, THERE WAS PEACE.
SADLY, ONLY FOR A MOMENT.

ENTER. FIND ME THE PROOF, DUTCHMAN.
FIND ME ALL THAT I REQUIRE.
IMPOSSIBLE!
ZZED CANNOT BE SO WRONG.
THERE IS FAR MORE HERE THAN MEETS THE EYE.
HIS PLANS PROVE HIS DEVICE WILL NOT DO AS HIS WRITINGS TELL.
THIS IS FAR WORSE THAN I IMAGINED.
BUT NOW, AT LEAST, I KNOW WHERE NEXT HE WILL STRIKE.

BALTIMORE...
YOU CAN'T KNOW HOW MUCH IT MEANS THAT YOU CAME.
HOLLY, TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF. GET WELL, AND QUICKLY.
ENOUGH MAUDLIN SENTIMENT. OTHERS WILL CARE FOR THIS GIRL. THERE IS WORK TO BE DONE.
HEY, FOR ONCE I'M WITH YOU, POPS.
BUT--
WHAT THE FREAKIN' HELL?
WHAT HAPPENED? WHERE ARE WE?
I DON'T KNOW AND I DON'T LIKE IT.
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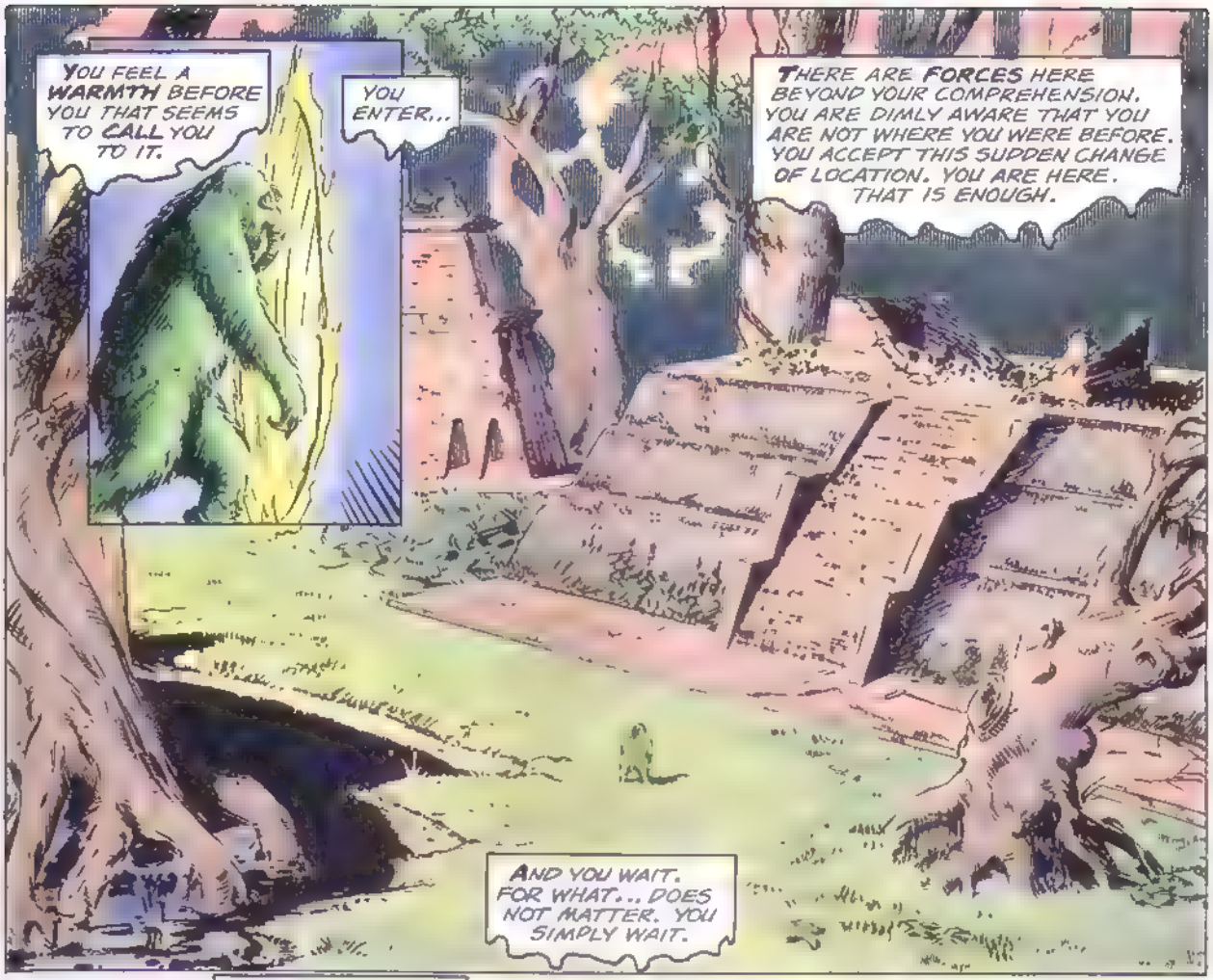
MAN, I DON'T KNOW WHO MISERY IS, BUT WITH A NAME LIKE THAT, HE CAN'T BE GOOD.
AN' THAT GOES DOUBLE FOR HIS LITTLE SOLDIER BOYS, TOO.
THEY CAME THROUGH ONE OF MISERY'S PORTALS.
THEY'RE WORKING FOR HIM!
TACHYON ?!?
14

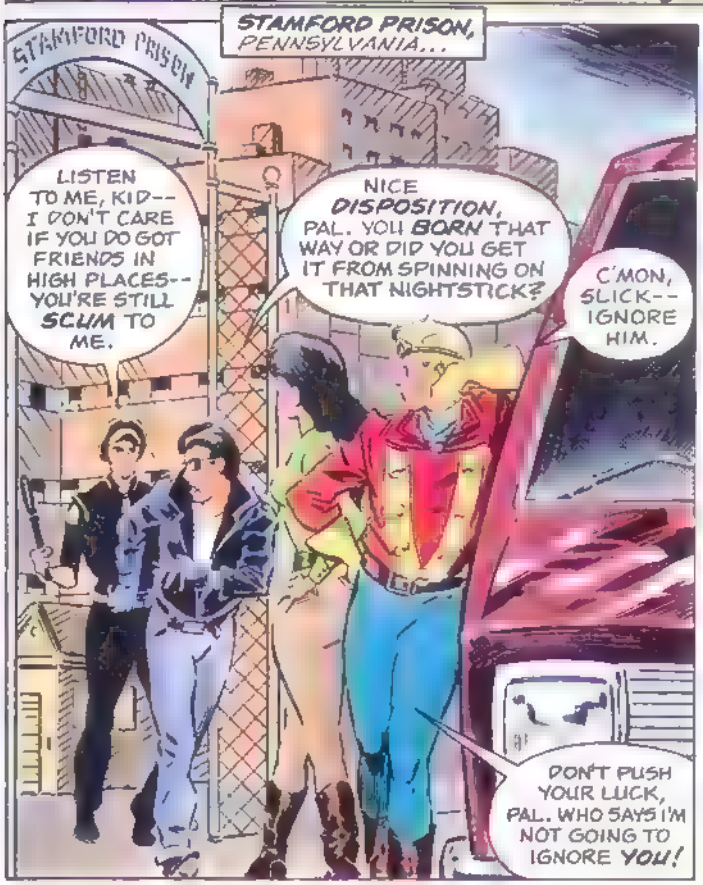
STOP! THERE IS NO REASON FOR THIS!
WE'RE NOT HERE TO--
BLOW IT OUT YOUR BUTT, MAN. YOU ATTACK US AND--
WHA!?
PERHAPS NOW YOU WILL LISTEN.
UFF!
LEO, WHAT ARE YOU DOING? WE ATTACKED THEM. DON'T SHOOT.
WHO ATTACKED WHOM NO LONGER MATTERS.
WHO FINISHES THE FIGHT IN ONE PIECE DOES!
HEY! STAND STILL! WHAT ARE YOU GUYS?
WE'RE CALLED THE NEW WAVE!
AND LIKE TACHYON SAID, WE DIDN'T COME HERE TO FIGHT YOU.
BUT WE'RE WILLING TO IF THAT'S WHAT IT TAKES.
TRUST ME ON THIS-- YOU DON'T WANT TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU GET ME ANGRY.

OKAY, WE'LL TALK, BUT I WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOU WERE DOING IN ONE OF MISERY'S PORTALS!
MISERY? IS THAT HIS NAME?
HE BROUGHT US HERE TO FIND YOU.
I NEEDED YOU ALL TOGETHER, NELSON.
MEIN GOTT! MISERY?
NO-- THAT IS NOT HIS SHAPE.
I-I RECOGNIZE HIM FROM THE NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS.
I AM GLAD YOU KNOW OF ME, NELSON. THERE ARE URGENT MATTERS TO DISCUSS.. A GREAT DANGER.
LISTEN TO THE ONES I BROUGHT TO YOU.
GOTT! GOTT! YOU DIED.., SO MANY YEARS AGO. WERE YOU MISERY'S PRISONER ALL THIS TIME?
HOLY HELL! THE POOR BASTARD!
OKAY, PUNK-- BETTER START TALKING. WHAT DID MISERY DO TO THE DUTCHMAN? HE MAY HAVE BEEN STRANGE, BUT HE FOUGHT THE GOOD FIGHT. HE DIDN'T DESERVE THIS!
IF YOU WANT ANSWERS, BIRD-HEAD, GET YOUR DAMN HANDS OFF ME!
WOLF, LET HIM GO.
I TOLD YOU-- I BATTLED VARIOUS MONSTERS MYSELF.
WE TOLD YOU, WE'RE NOT WITH THAT MISERY WHATEVER-HE-IS. WE FOUGHT SOME CREATURES, THEN WE SUDDENLY FOUND OURSELVES HERE.
THEN WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON?
WHAT IS AT STAKE, PILOT-- IS THE FATE OF THIS UNIVERSE.
AND TO PREVENT ITS DESTRUCTION, WE MUST BAND TOGETHER.

THE VILLAIN IS NAMED ZZED, AND IT WAS HIS WARRIORS WHO STOLE YOUR AIRCRAFT.
HE BUILDS MACHINES TO ENCIRCLE YOUR WORLD. MACHINES AT ONCE SCIENTIFIC AND ARCANE. TO SUCCEED, HOWEVER, HE MUST STEAL PARTS FROM A GOVERNMENT LAB, HIDDEN IN THE BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS. YOU AIRFIGHTERS MUST GO OUT TO STOP HIM.
WAIT A SECOND, DUTCHMAN, I--
NELSON-- BE SILENT. ZZED HAS ALSO LIED TO CREATURES CALLED THE SERAPHIM, TOLD THEM HE SEEKS ONLY TO DESTROY THE EARTH. THE SERAPHIM ARE POWERFUL, AND THEY HAVE BEEN SENT TO CONTROL A MYSTIC GEM ATOP AN AZTEC TEMPLE NEAR MEXICO CITY. I WILL SEND THE HEAP...
I KNOW THE PROJECT. I MET ONE OF THEM.
BUT THIS IS ALL SO CONFUSING... HOW CAN WE TRUST ONE OF MISERY'S OWN?
...BUT THERE ARE OTHERS YOU CAN USE--THEY CALL THEMSELVES THE LIBERTY PROJECT.
I DON'T LIKE ANYTHIN' THAT SMELLS OF SCUM, AND THIS STINKS LIKE A MARRAKESH OUTHOUSE.
THIS MISERY GUY BROUGHT US HERE JUST LIKE HE SAID. THE MONSTERS WE FOUGHT WERE REAL! WE HAVE TO TRY.
I'LL DO IT. ONLY, WHEN I'M DONE-- I'M GOIN' TO GET BACK THE DUTCHMAN.
AND THEN I'M GONNA KICK MISERY'S SKINNY BUTT FROM HERE BACK TO HELL.
ALL RIGHT. VAL AND I WILL GET THE PROJECT AND SEND THEM OFF TO STOP THE SERAPHIM. SKY, YOU GET THE PLANES OUTFITTED AND FIGURE OUT HOW TO GET TO THAT LAB-PLACE. WE'LL REJOIN YOU AS SOON AS WE CAN.
YOU GOING TO BE OKAY, SKY?
WHEN I GET BACK THE DUTCH-MAN.
THEN, YEAH.

THE LIBERTY PROJECT IS STILL IN PRISON.
I KNOW...
.. BUT WHAT'S THE GOOD OF OWNING A MEGA-CORPORATION IF YOU CAN'T HIRE SOMEONE ON A WORK-RELEASE PROGRAM?
THE PROJECT BATTLED THE SERAPHIM BEFORE. I'M BETTING THEY CAN DO IT AGAIN.
I KNOW WHY SKY IS SHAKEN, DAVY. THIS THING WITH THE FLYING DUTCHMAN SCARES ME, TOO.
REMEMBER, MISERY HELD ME IN SUSPENDED ANIMATION FOR YEARS.
I KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE IN HIS AIR-TOMB.
GOTT! WHAT HORROR THE DUTCHMAN MUST BE SUFFERING.
UNLIKE YOU, DEAR VALKYRIE, IT IS A HORROR OF HIS OWN CREATION. NOW HE WILLINGLY OBEYS MY MEREST WHIM.
AS WILL YOU AND NELSON... ONE DAY SOON.
BUT ENOUGH. THE LIBERTY PROJECT IS NOT AS POWERFUL AS THEY WERE WHEN THEY LAST BATTLED THE SERAPHIM.
I PROMISED NELSON ASSIS-TANCE.
RAW, BESTIAL STRENGTH, IN A NEAR MINDLESS FIGHTING MACHINE.
YES, THE HEAP WILL DO QUITE WELL.


YOU FEEL A WARMTH BEFORE YOU THAT SEEMS TO CALL YOU TO IT.
YOU ENTER...
THERE ARE FORCES HERE BEYOND YOUR COMPREHENSION. YOU ARE DIMLY AWARE THAT YOU ARE NOT WHERE YOU WERE BEFORE. YOU ACCEPT THIS SUDDEN CHANGE OF LOCATION. YOU ARE HERE. THAT IS ENOUGH.
AND YOU WAIT. FOR WHAT... DOES NOT MATTER. YOU SIMPLY WAIT.

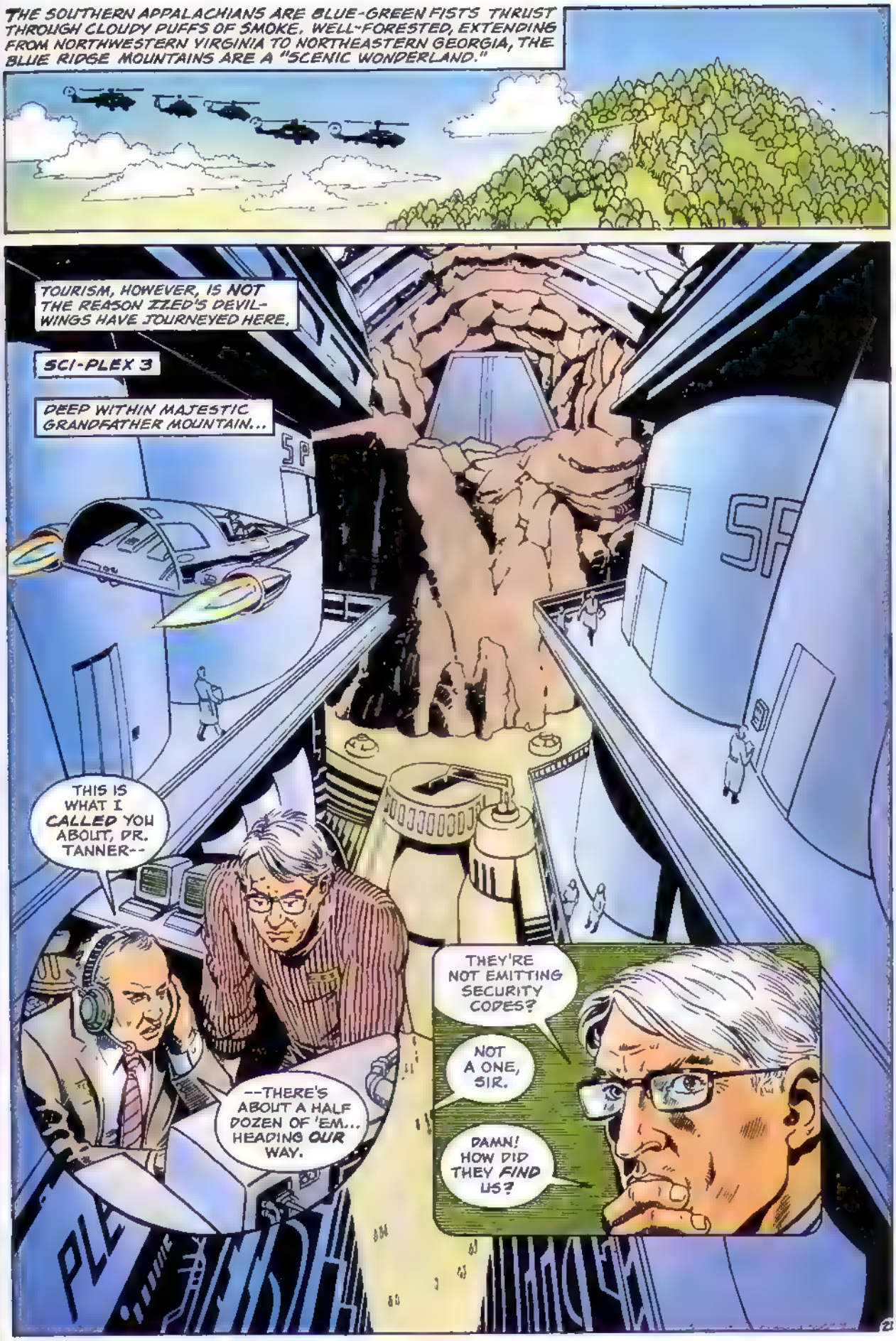

STAMFORD PRISON
STAMFORD PRISON, PENNSYLVANIA...
LISTEN TO ME, KID-- I DON'T CARE IF YOU DO GOT FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES-- YOU'RE STILL SCUM TO ME.
NICE DISPOSITION, PAL. YOU BORN THAT WAY OR DID YOU GET IT FROM SPINNING ON THAT NIGHTSTICK?
C'MON, SLICK-- IGNORE HIM.
DON'T PUSH YOUR LUCK, PAL. WHO SAYS I'M NOT GOING TO IGNORE YOU!

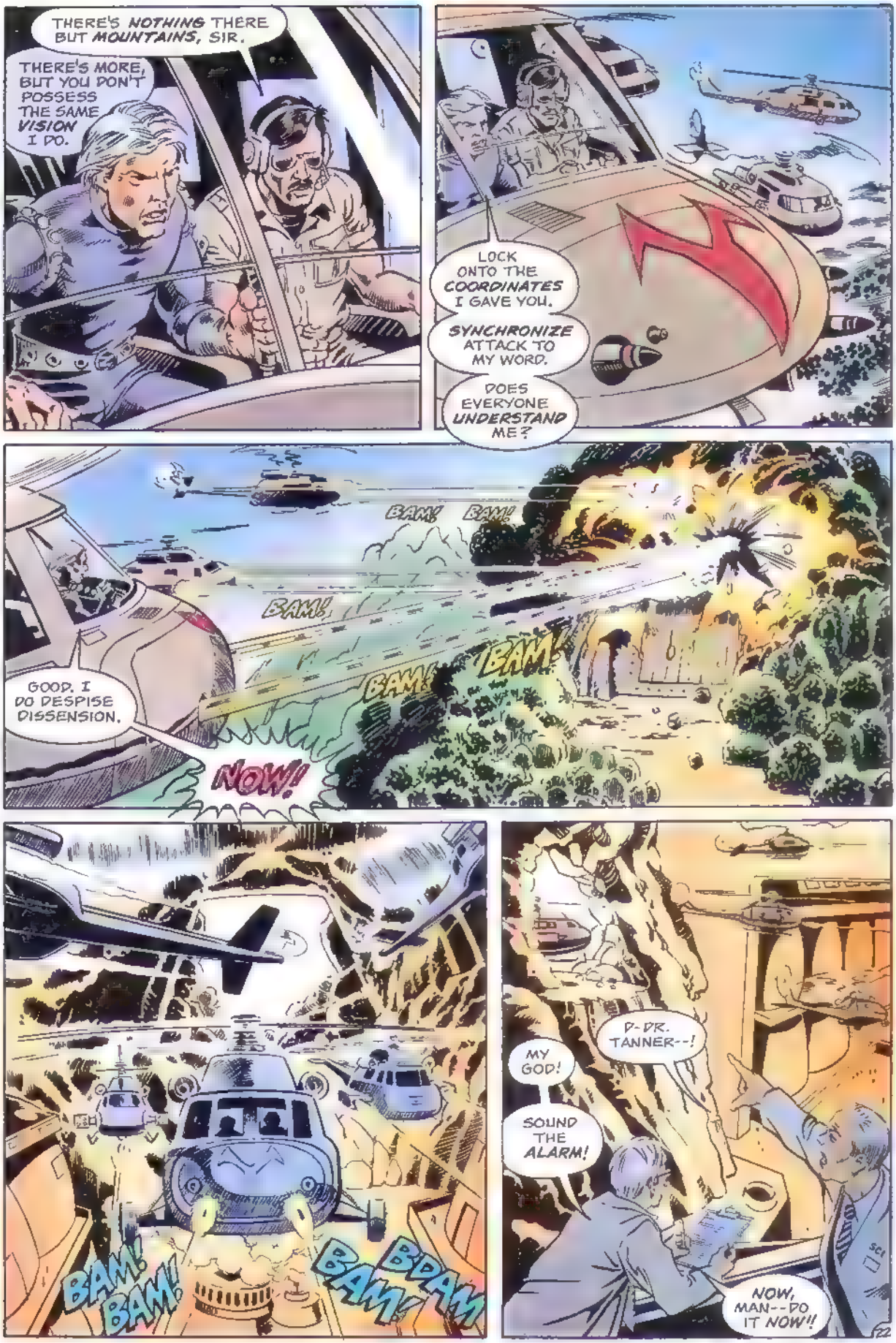
WELL, WELL, THE GANG'S ALL HERE.
CRACKSHOT, BURNOUT AND CIMARRON. NELSON'S GOT MORE PULL THAN I THOUGHT.
HOW HAVE YOU BEEN, SLICK?
COULD'A BEEN WORSE, PAL. COULD'A BEEN MUCH WORSE.

...ANYWAY, THAT'S WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING. WE REALLY NEED YOU.
I CAN SEE. I JUST DON'T KNOW IF I WANT TO BE SHOT AT ANYMORE. WHY BOTHER?
IT DOESN'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE TO ME.
BUT I'M GLAD TO SEE THE REST OF YOU ARE ALL RIGHT.
YEAH, YEAH--YA KNOW YOUR PROBLEM, FLAT-TOP? YOU GOT WIMP OOZING OUT OF YOUR EARS.
ME, I WANT OUT AND I DON'T WANT BACK IN AGAIN--EVER! IT SUCKS IN THERE.

I'M JUST GLAD YOU BELIEVED IN ME, VAL. GLAD SOMEONE DID.
BUT SLICK'S ON THE MONEY-- WE'VE BEEN RUN ROUGHSHOD OVER--
--SO WHY SHOULD WE HELP NOW?

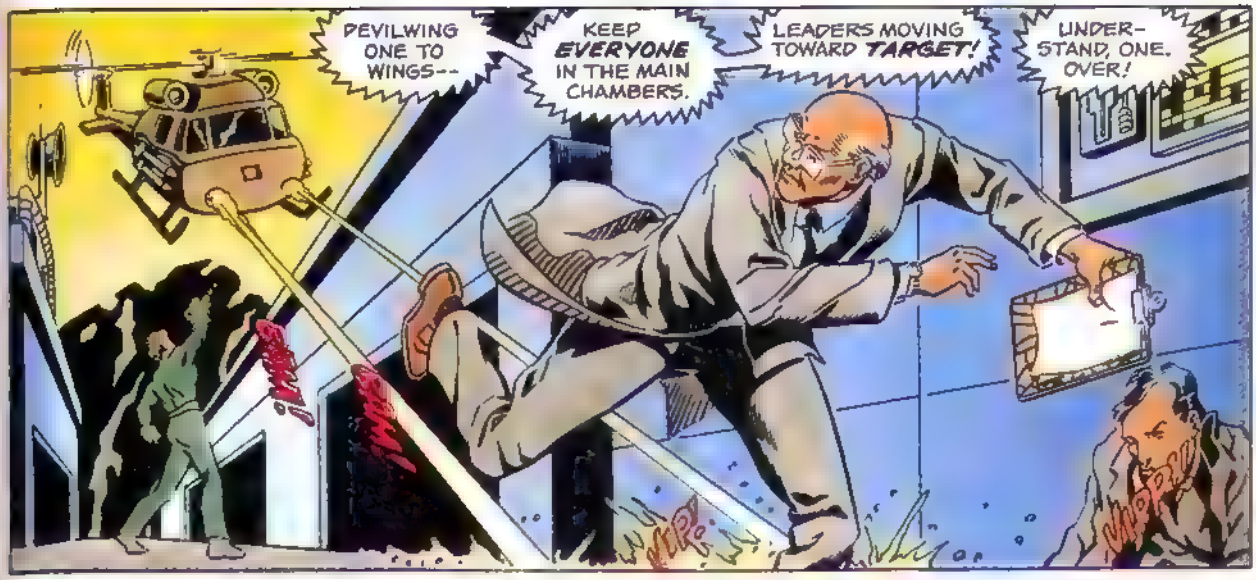
YOU SAID IT, CIMARRON. YOU WANT US, HERE'S OUR TERMS--NO SUPERVISION. THE NECK THINGS GO.
AND WE'RE NOT WEARING ANY UNIFORMS. GOT IT?
I DON'T THINK THAT WILL BE ANY PROBLEM. SO YOU'LL HELP?
FOR NOW, ANYWAY, YOU GOT YOURSELF SOME PART-TIME AND VERY TEMPORARY GOOD GUYS.
MORE TEMPORARY THAN YOU MIGHT THINK.

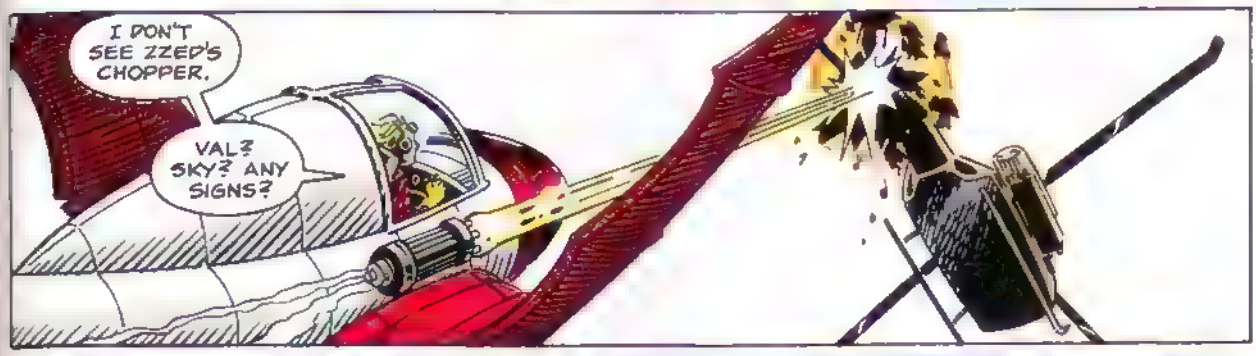

THE SOUTHERN APPALACHIANS ARE BLUE-GREEN FISTS THRUST THROUGH CLOUDY PUFFS OF SMOKE. WELL-FORESTED, EXTENDING FROM NORTHWESTERN VIRGINIA TO NORTHEASTERN GEORGIA, THE BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS ARE A "SCENIC WONDERLAND."
TOURISM, HOWEVER, IS NOT THE REASON IZZED'S DEVIL-WINGS HAVE JOURNEYED HERE.
SCI-PLEX 3
DEEP WITHIN MAJESTIC GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN...
THIS IS WHAT I CALLED YOU ABOUT, DR. TANNER--
--THERE'S ABOUT A HALF DOZEN OF 'EM... HEADING OUR WAY.
THEY'RE NOT EMITTING SECURITY CODES?
NOT A ONE, SIR.
DAMN! HOW DID THEY FIND US?


THERE'S NOTHING THERE BUT MOUNTAINS, SIR.
THERE'S MORE, BUT YOU DON'T POSSESS THE SAME VISION I DO.
LOCK ONTO THE COORDINATES I GAVE YOU.
SYNCHRONIZE ATTACK TO MY WORD.
DOES EVERYONE UNDERSTAND ME?
BAM!
BAM!
BAM!
BAM!
BAM!
GOOD. I DO DESPISE DISSENSION.
NOW!
BAM! BAM!
BDAM
BAM!
MY GOD!
D-DR. TANNER--!
SOUND THE ALARM!
NOW, MAN--DO IT NOW!!
22

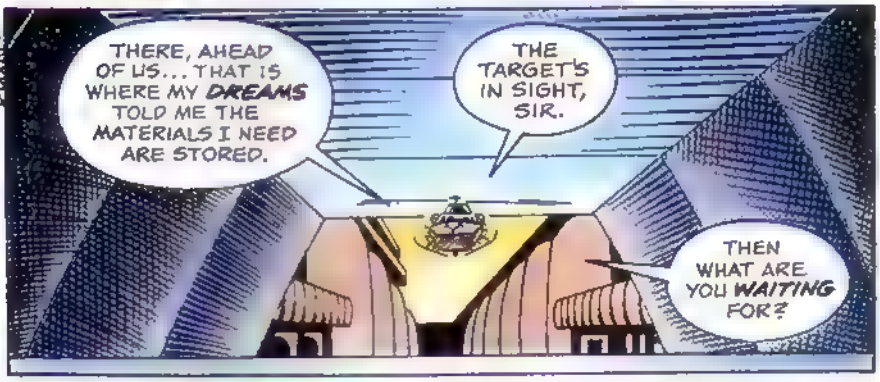
SIR, WE NEED GOVERNMENT TROOPS...WE'RE NOT EQUIPPED TO HANDLE A FULL-SCALE INVASION!
TELL ME SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW. RED ALERT!
SECURITY!
LET THE OTHERS FIGHT.
WE GO FOR THE GOLD!
THERE THEY ARE. C'MON--
--LET'S KICK SOME ASS!
THERE ARE SIX HELI-COPTERS.
LET US STOP THEM BEFORE ANYONE ELSE GETS HURT.
HIT THE LEAD COPTER! TRY AND CONFINE THEIR FLYING SPACE.
DAMN! HOW DID I LET MY-SELF GET TALKED INTO THIS, BOY?
YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE OF US WHO KNOWS HOW TO FLY!
DON'T REMIND ME!
I SWEAR, I'LL GIVE MYSELF A STROKE BEFORE THIS IS DONE.

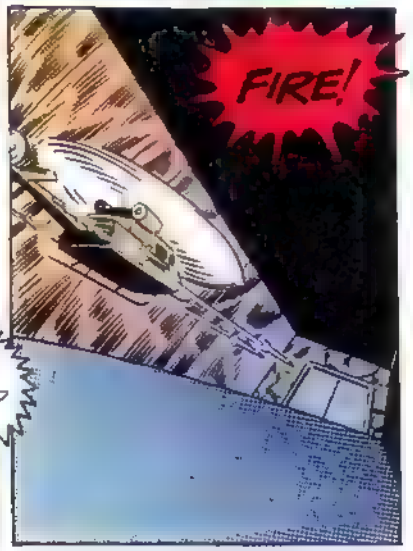
MOVE IN FAST-- THEN BANK OUT. WE'RE NOT TRYING TO BE HEROES.
REALLY? THEN WHAT THE HELL ARE WE DOING HERE?
IF WE'RE JUST SPINNING OUR WHEELS HERE, I WANT OUT!
ZZED'S MEN ARE DEFINITELY THE ONES WHO STOLE YOUR JETS, DAVY.
DAMMIT, THEY'RE ALL OVER THE PLACE.
UH-OH--
IMPULSE, POLESTAR-- WATCH IT!
SUCKER'S COMING IN BEHIND YOU!
OKAY, OKAY...DO WHATEVER YOU HAVE TO.
I'M REALLY GLAD TO GET YOUR PERMISSION, SIR!
SHEEEEE--
ALREADY HEARD IT, DOT-- BUT THANKS.
N18949
MY STICK'S GETTING US NOWHERE.
WHAT THE HELL ARE AVALON AND TACHYON DOING? THEY'RE THE ONES WITH REAL POWERS.
HEY! I'M A TELEKINETIC! YOU THINK THAT'S CHOPPED LIVER?
THEN DON'T JUST FLOAT THERE--DO SOMETHING!


DEVILWING ONE TO WINGS--
KEEP EVERYONE IN THE MAIN CHAMBERS.
LEADERS MOVING TOWARD TARGET!
UNDER-STAND, ONE. OVER!
WHIRR

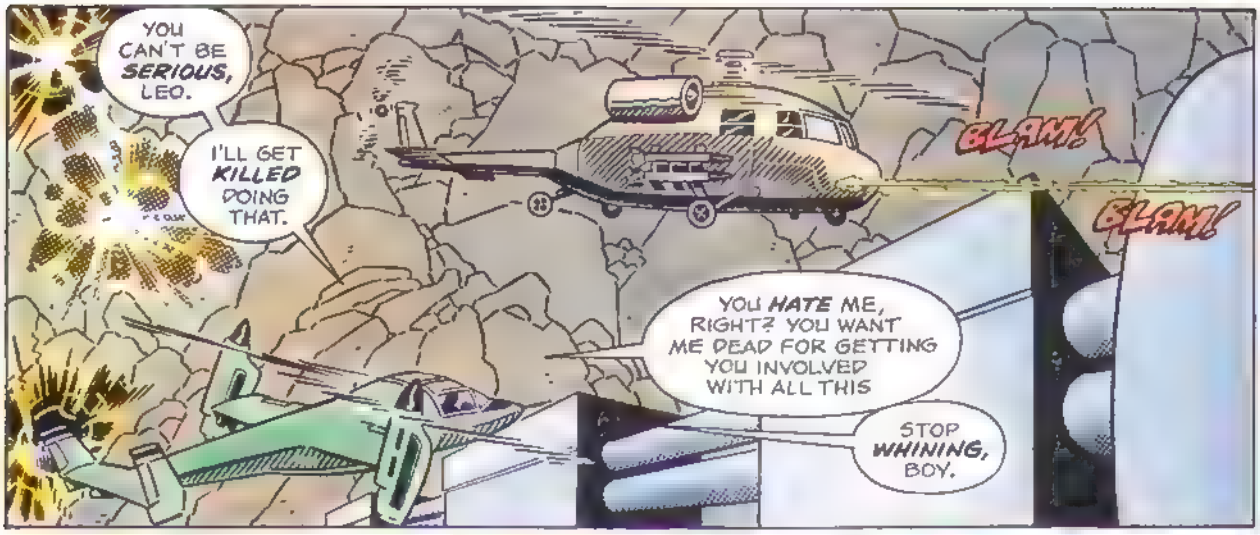

I DON'T SEE ZZED'S CHOPPER.
VAL? SKY? ANY SIGNS?

NONE, DAVY.
I BET THAT BOOGER'S UP TO SOME-THING.
I AGREE, SKY. LET'S FAN OUT AND FIND HIM.


THERE, AHEAD OF US... THAT IS WHERE MY DREAMS TOLD ME THE MATERIALS I NEED ARE STORED.
THE TARGET'S IN SIGHT, SIR.
THEN WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

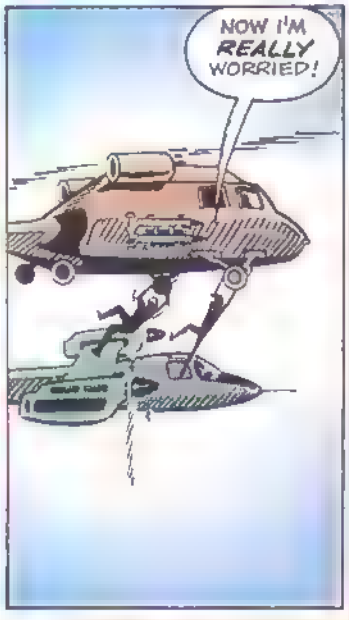

FIRE!

KRA-BLMMOO!

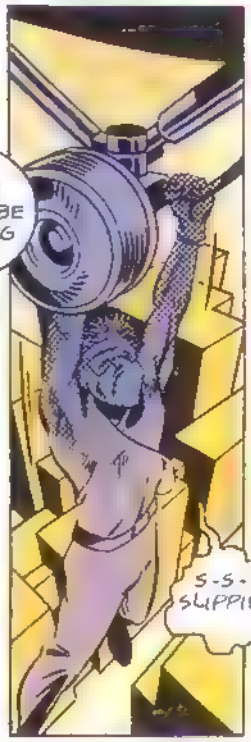

YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS, LEO.
I'LL GET KILLED DOING THAT.
KRAKOOM
CLANK!
CLANK!
YOU HATE ME, RIGHT? YOU WANT ME DEAD FOR GETTING YOU INVOLVED WITH ALL THIS
STOP WHINING, BOY.

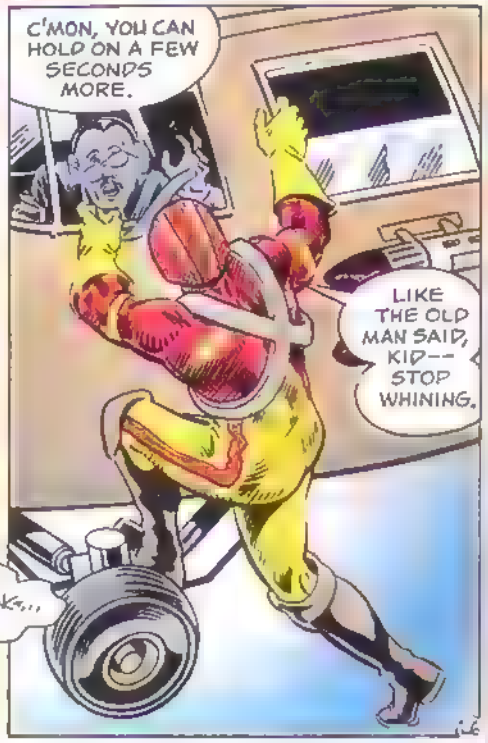
YOU AND STRIKE WILL LEAP ONTO THE CHOPPER AND TAKE IT OVER.
WE'RE FIGHTING FOR OUR LIVES AND YOU WANT ME TO PLAY ERROL FLYNN.
NOT FLYNN-- FAIRBANKS! HE WAS A REAL STAR!

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, SCOTT-- I'LL KEEP MY EYE ON YOU.


NOW I'M REALLY WORRIED!

LEO'S SWAYING TOO MUCH. I CAN'T KEEP HOLD.
IT DOESN'T SEEM TO BE BOTHERING ME.
YOU'VE ALSO GOT A HARNESS THAT GIVES YOU STRENGTH-- MAKES YOU INVULNER-ABLE.

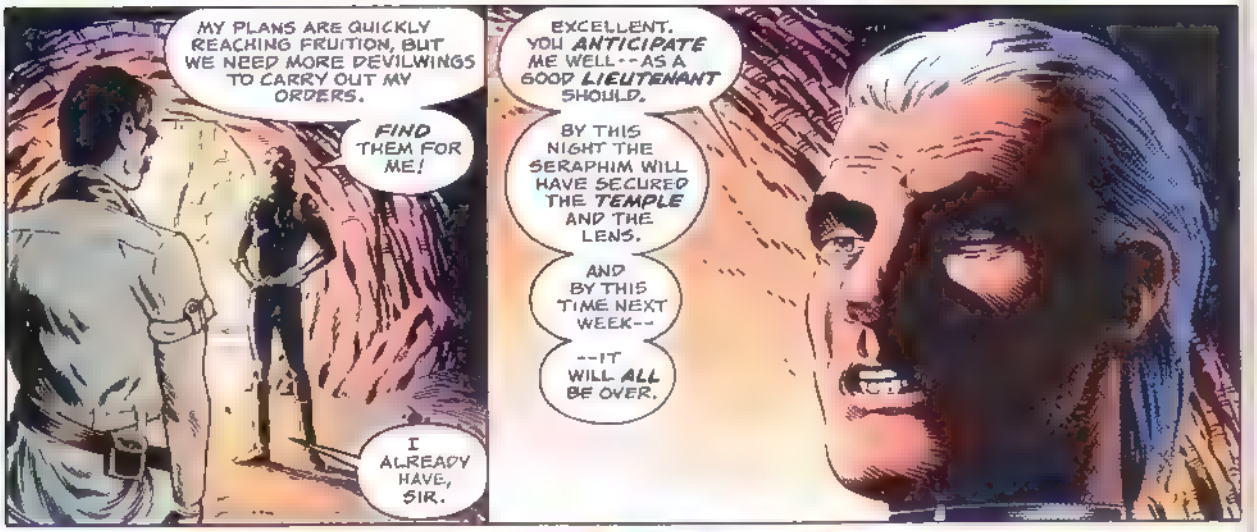

S-S-SLIPPING...

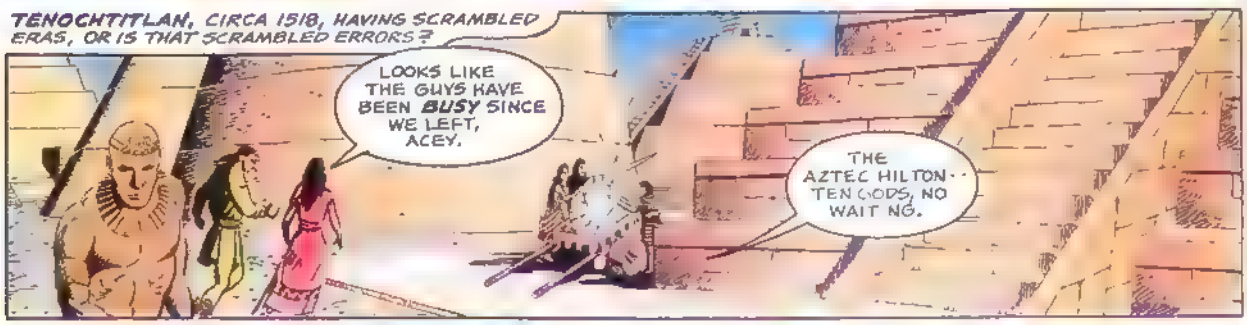

C'MON, YOU CAN HOLD ON A FEW SECONDS MORE.
LIKE THE OLD MAN SAID, KID-- STOP WHINING.

DAMMIT, STRIKE!
GET DOWN HERE. I NEED YOU!
OKAY, OKAY-- I'M DONE ANYWAY.
DON'T GET YOUR COWL IN AN UPROAR. I'M COMING!
HURRY! JUST--
SCOTT!
AAAAAAAAA
MY GOD! WHAT HAVE I DONE?
HOLD ON, SON. I'VE GOT YOU.
OH, THANK GOD, THANK GOD, THANK GOD.
I NEVER THOUGHT I'D BE GLAD TO SEE A FLYING BLUE GUY.
GOOD TO MEET YOU, SCOTT. THEY CALL ME TACHYON.
VAL-- GOT ONE. HOW ARE YOU DOING?
BOOM!
MOVING IN.. GOT MY TARGET IN SIGHT.
YOU SEE? YOU PROBABLY THOUGHT I WAS CRAZY.
BUT THERE IT IS, JUST AS MY DREAMS FORETOLD.
GET THE PROJECTOR QUICKLY.
AND THEN LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!

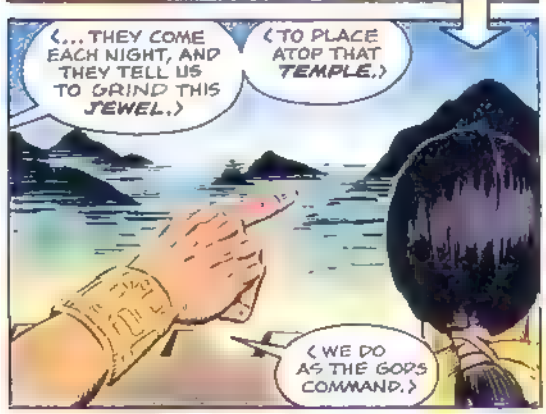
DAVY-- I FOUND ZZED.
HE'S NOT GONNA MAKE IT OUT OF HERE.
AT LEAST NOT IN ONE PIECE.
GO AHEAD, YOU FOOL-- SHOOT! KILL ME!
BAM BAM BAM BAM!
I'VE HAD BETTER MEN THAN YOU TRY TO GIVE ME PEACE, AND THEY ALL FAILED, TOO.
HOLY HELL! WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO KILL YOU?
THAT'S WHAT I INTEND TO FIND OUT.
SKY? WHAT'S GOING ON?
SKY, DO YOU HEAR ME?
DAMN IT, SKY-- TALK TO ME!
SPAA-BOOM!!

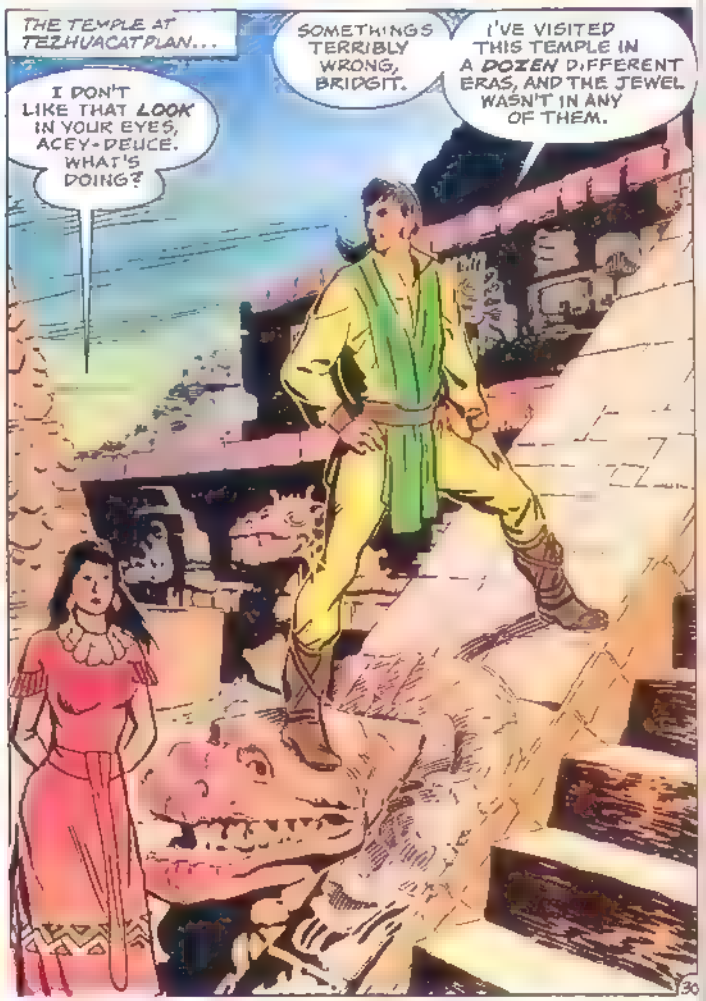
QUICKLY-- DO YOU HAVE THE PROJECTOR?
YES, SIR.
I--
THEN LET'S GET OUT OF HERE.
BUT WHAT ABOUT THE OTHERS?
THOSE WHO DON'T SURVIVE--? WELL, THERE'S MORE WHERE THOSE MEN CAME FROM. MOVE.
I--JUST DON'T BELIEVE IT!
HOME!
AND MY NEW BEGINNING!
SKY'S DOWN. HE NEEDS HELP!
I'M GOING TO PICK HIM UP.
MOST OF THE DEVILWINGS MADE IT OUT.
ZZED WON, BOY. AND WE LOST!
I DON'T THINK SO, PROWLER. WE ONLY LOST THE BATTLE--
--NOT THE WAR!
YOUR YOUTHFUL ENTHUSIASM BORDERS ON THE NAU-SEATING!
IF YOU EXPECT TO WIN THIS WAR, WE NEED HELP!
WE NEED MISERY.
...MISERY?
OH, MY GOD.


MY PLANS ARE QUICKLY REACHING FRUITION, BUT WE NEED MORE DEVILWINGS TO CARRY OUT MY ORDERS.
FIND THEM FOR ME!
I ALREADY HAVE, SIR.
EXCELLENT. YOU ANTICIPATE ME WELL--AS A GOOD LIEUTENANT SHOULD.
BY THIS NIGHT THE SERAPHIM WILL HAVE SECURED THE TEMPLE AND THE LENS.
AND BY THIS TIME NEXT WEEK--
--IT WILL ALL BE OVER.

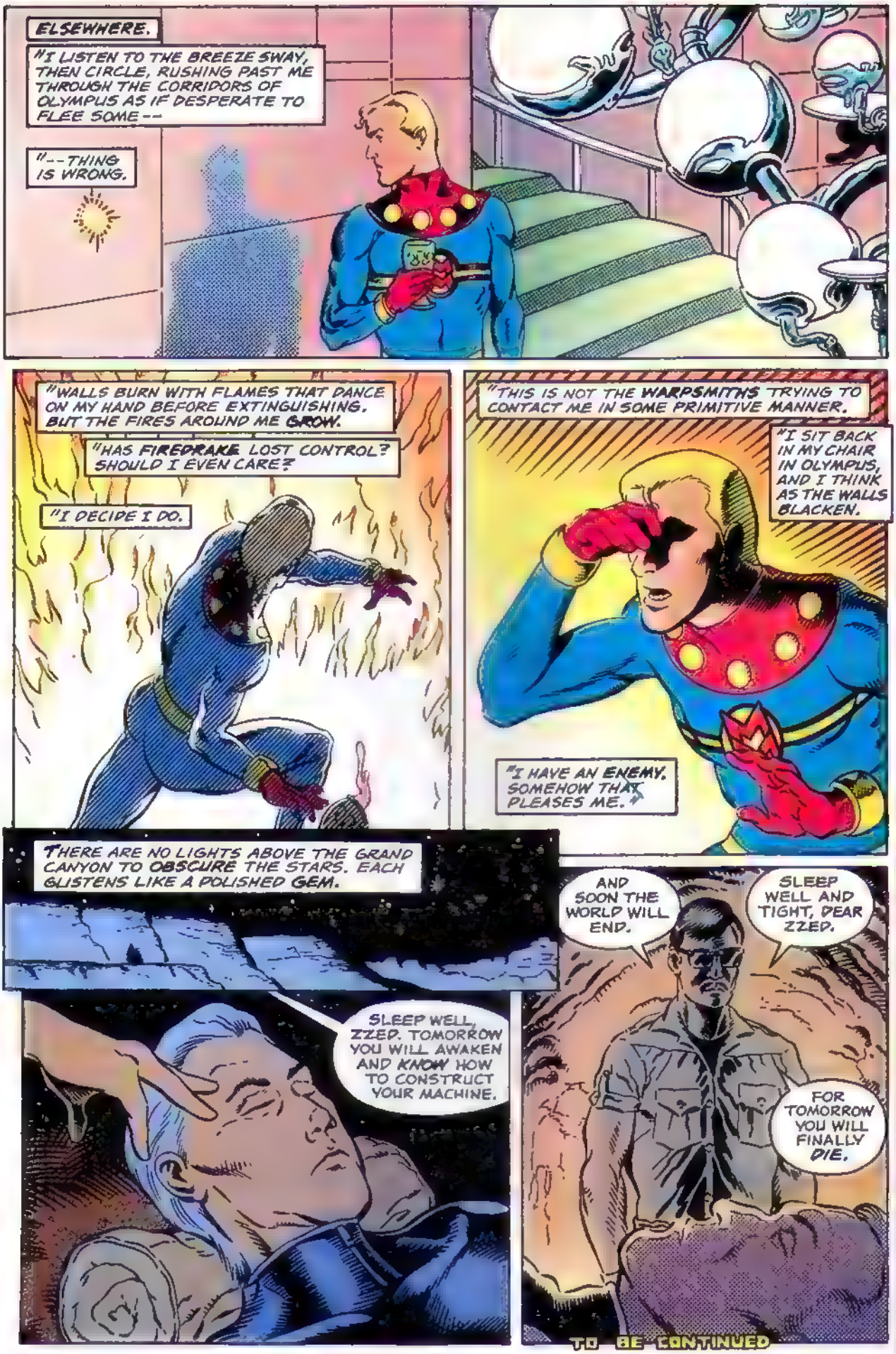

TENOCHTITLAN, CIRCA 1518, HAVING SCRAMBLED ERAS, OR IS THAT SCRAMBLED ERRORS?
LOOKS LIKE THE GUYS HAVE BEEN BUSY SINCE WE LEFT, ACEY.
THE AZTEC HILTON--TEN GODS, NO WAIT NO.

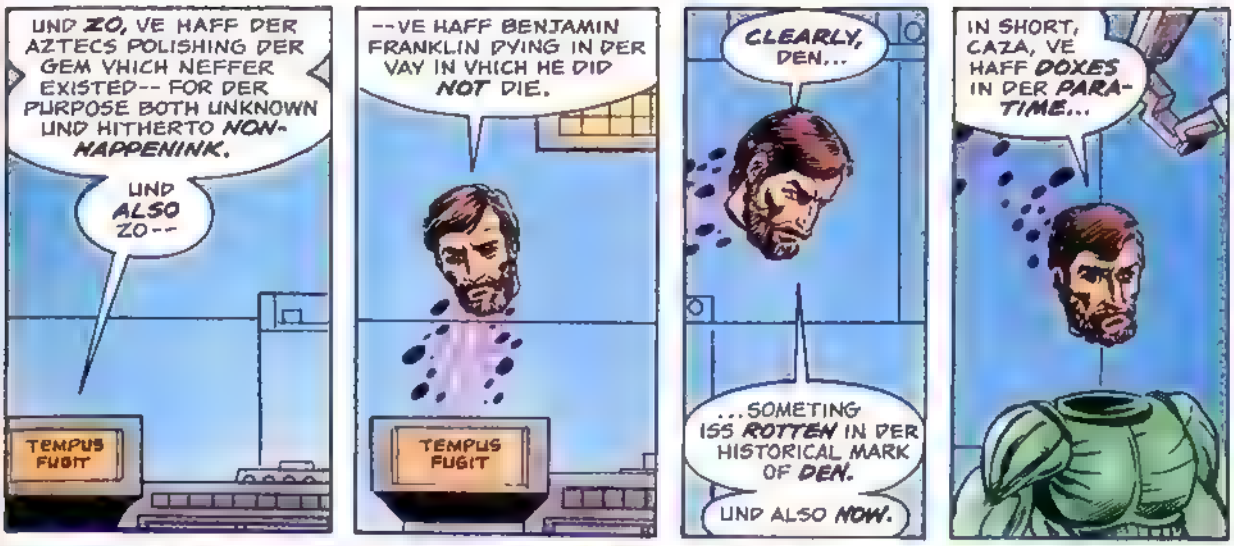
MAKE A LOVELY RING--FOR MRS. KING KONG.
<WHAT IS THIS PATH IN WHICH YOU ARE ENGAGED?>
<VOICES...>


<...THEY COME EACH NIGHT, AND THEY TELL US TO GRIND THIS JEWEL.>
<TO PLACE ATOP THAT TEMPLE.>
<WE DO AS THE GODS COMMAND.>


THE TEMPLE AT TEZHUACATPLAN...
I DON'T LIKE THAT LOOK IN YOUR EYES, ACEY-DEUCE. WHAT'S DOING?
SOMETHING'S TERRIBLY WRONG, BRIDGIT.
I'VE VISITED THIS TEMPLE IN A DOZEN DIFFERENT ERAS, AND THE JEWEL WASN'T IN ANY OF THEM.

AND TROUBLE LIKE THIS USUALLY MEANS THERE'S A VERY BIG DOXIE-GLITCH WORKING SOMEWHERE.
YOU CAN'T FOOL WITH TIME WITHOUT IT SLAPPING YOU BACK.
SO WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT IT?
PACK IN SOME SLUG-SLIME FUEL AND HEAD FOR THE AZURE CROSS-TIME EXPRESS.
WE NEED TO SEE HOW FAR THIS GLITCH HAS GONE.
LET'S PICK A FOCAL POINT AND VREEB!
A CORPSE IS A CORPSE, OF COURSE, OF COURSE.
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.
WHICH PROVES TIME'S BEEN TAMPERED WITH.
WHO'S THE STIFF, ACEY-DEUCE?
PRESIDENT WASHINGTON, WHAT HAPPENED?
THE DAMN FOOL AND HIS KITE.
IT ATTRACTED THE LIGHTNING AND IT KILLED HIM.
IF JEFFERSON AND I WARNED HIM ONCE, WE WARNED HIM A THOUSAND TIMES.
WHENEVER WE'RE GOING NEXT, CAN I AT LEAST CHANGE INTO MY OWN CLOTHES?
SUIT YOURSELF. WITH THIS FAR-RANGING A POXIE-GLITCH, BRASS BRA-CUPS CAN'T HURT.
SOMETHING TELLS ME THIS MIGHT BE THE WORST THREAT WE'VE YET FACED, SO I MIGHT AS WELL ENJOY THE VIEW.


ELSEWHERE.
"I LISTEN TO THE BREEZE SWAY, THEN CIRCLE, RUSHING PAST ME THROUGH THE CORRIDORS OF OLYMPUS AS IF DESPERATE TO FLEE SOME--
"--THING IS WRONG.
"WALLS BURN WITH FLAMES THAT DANCE ON MY HAND BEFORE EXTINGUISHING. BUT THE FIRES AROUND ME GROW.
"HAS FIREDRAKE LOST CONTROL? SHOULD I EVEN CARE?
"I DECIDE I DO.
"THIS IS NOT THE WARPSMITHS TRYING TO CONTACT ME IN SOME PRIMITIVE MANNER.
"I SIT BACK IN MY CHAIR IN OLYMPUS, AND I THINK AS THE WALLS BLACKEN.
"I HAVE AN ENEMY. SOMEHOW THAT PLEASES ME."
THERE ARE NO LIGHTS ABOVE THE GRAND CANYON TO OBSCURE THE STARS. EACH GLISTENS LIKE A POLISHED GEM.
SLEEP WELL, ZZED. TOMORROW YOU WILL AWAKEN AND KNOW HOW TO CONSTRUCT YOUR MACHINE.
AND SOON THE WORLD WILL END.
SLEEP WELL AND TIGHT, DEAR ZZED.
FOR TOMORROW YOU WILL FINALLY DIE.
TO BE CONTINUED

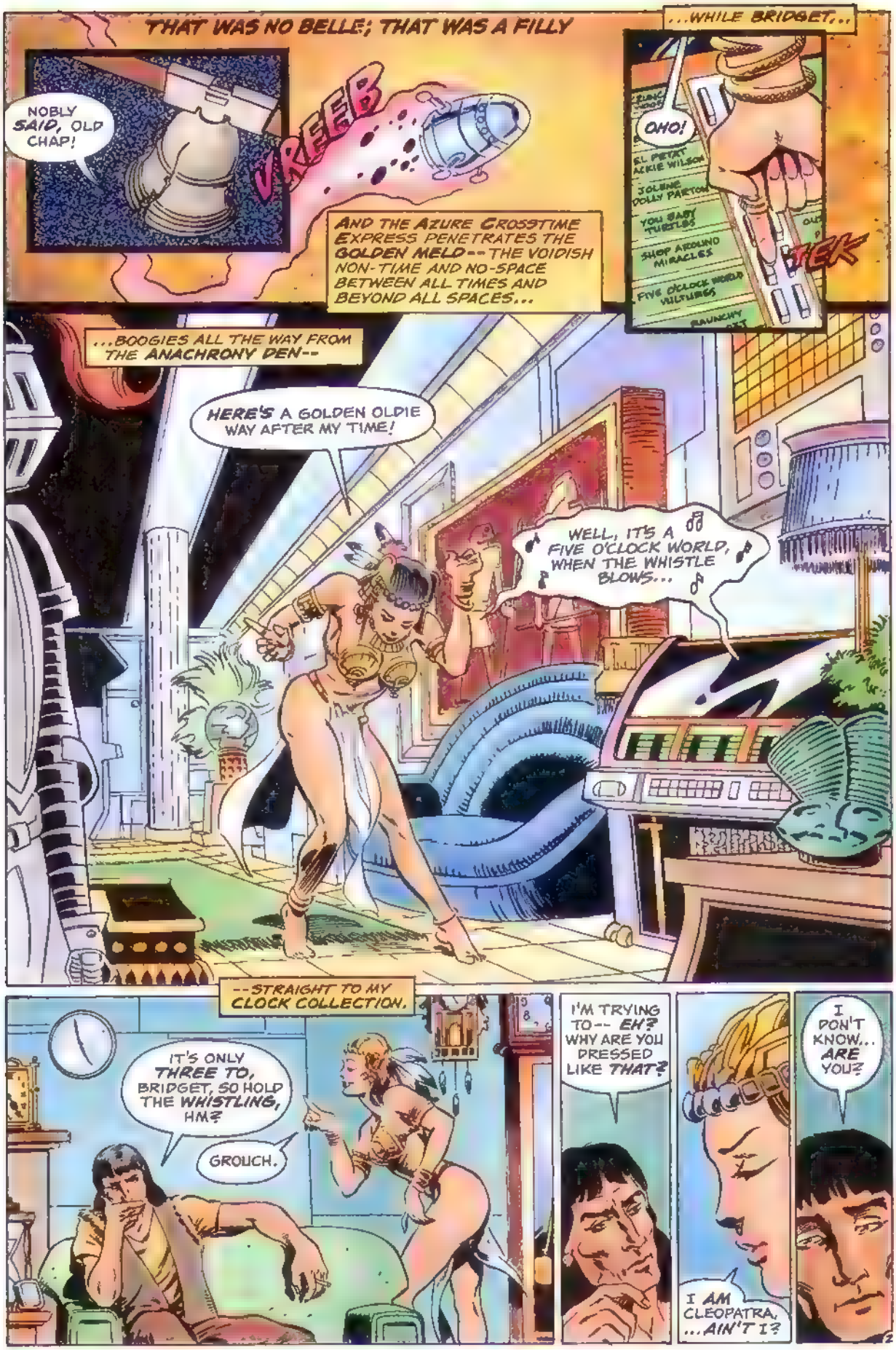

UND ZO, VE HAFF DER AZTECS POLISHING DER GEM VHICH NEFFER EXISTED-- FOR DER PURPOSE BOTH UNKNOWN UND HITHERTO NON-HAPPENINK.
UND ALSO ZO--
TEMPUS FUGIT
--VE HAFF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN DYING IN DER VAY IN VHICH HE DID NOT DIE.
TEMPUS FUGIT
CLEARLY, DEN...
...SOMETING ISS ROTTEN IN DER HISTORICAL MARK OF DEN.
UND ALSO NOW.
IN SHORT, CAZA, VE HAFF DOXES IN DER PARA-TIME...

AZTEC ACE

ANACHROMESH IN THE MELD

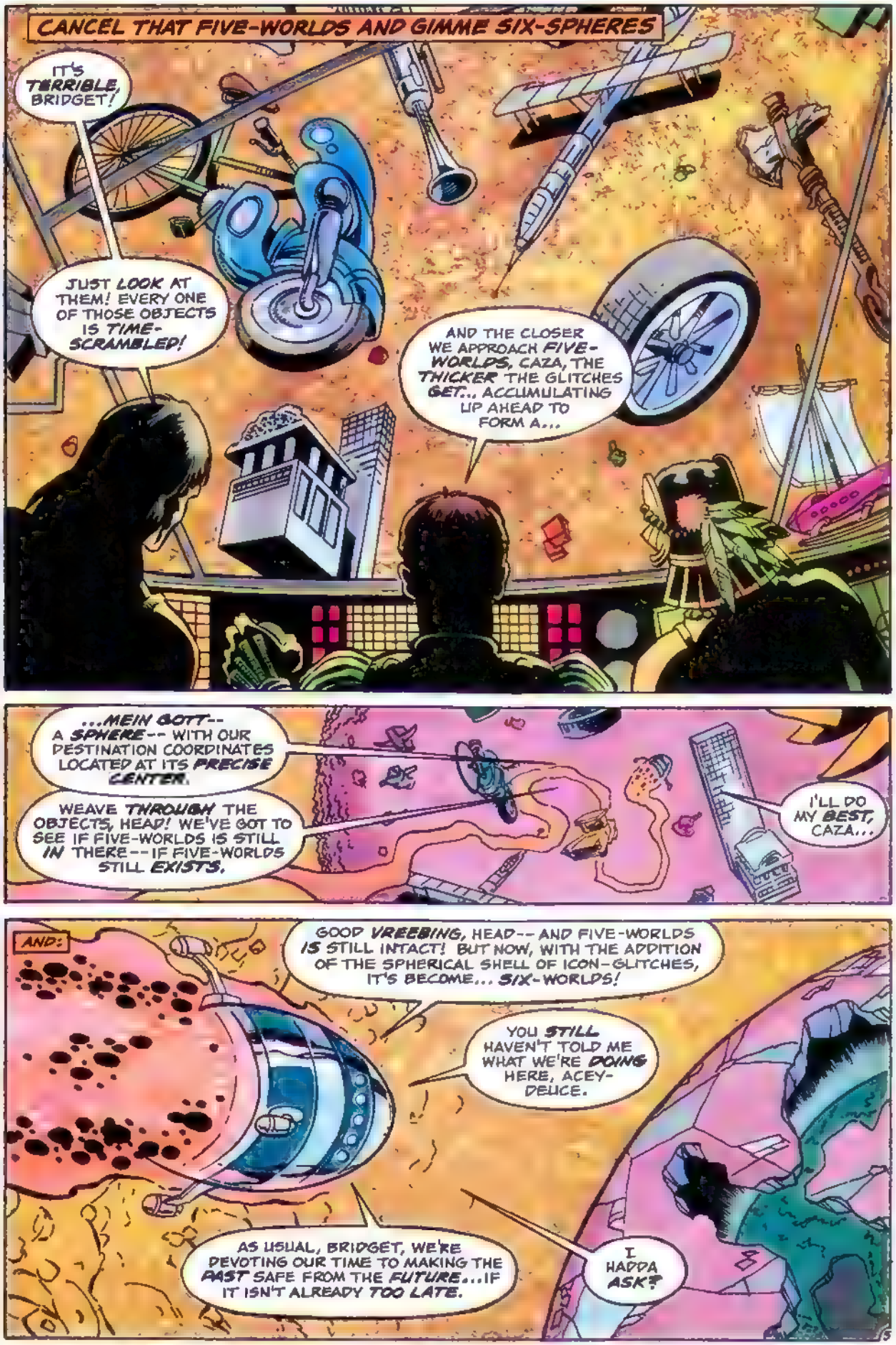
OR PARADOXES IN DER TIME, NO?
YES -- AND THESE DOXIE-GLITCHES MAY BE NASTY ENOUGH TO TRASH TIME, TEMPUS, SO KNOCK OFF THE LOOPY TEUTONIC ACCENT.
QUITE RIGHT, MY GOOD CHAP-- SO SORRY AND ALL THAT, EH, WOT?
JUST HIT THE MELD, HEAD, AND MAKE FOR THE CORE OF FIVE-WORLDS-- WHILE I MARK TIME.

WRITER/CREATOR	PENCILLER	INKER	LETTERER	COLORIST	EDITOR
DOUG MOENCH	TIM SALE	MARK PACELLA	BILL PEARSON	OLYOPTICS	FRED BURKE

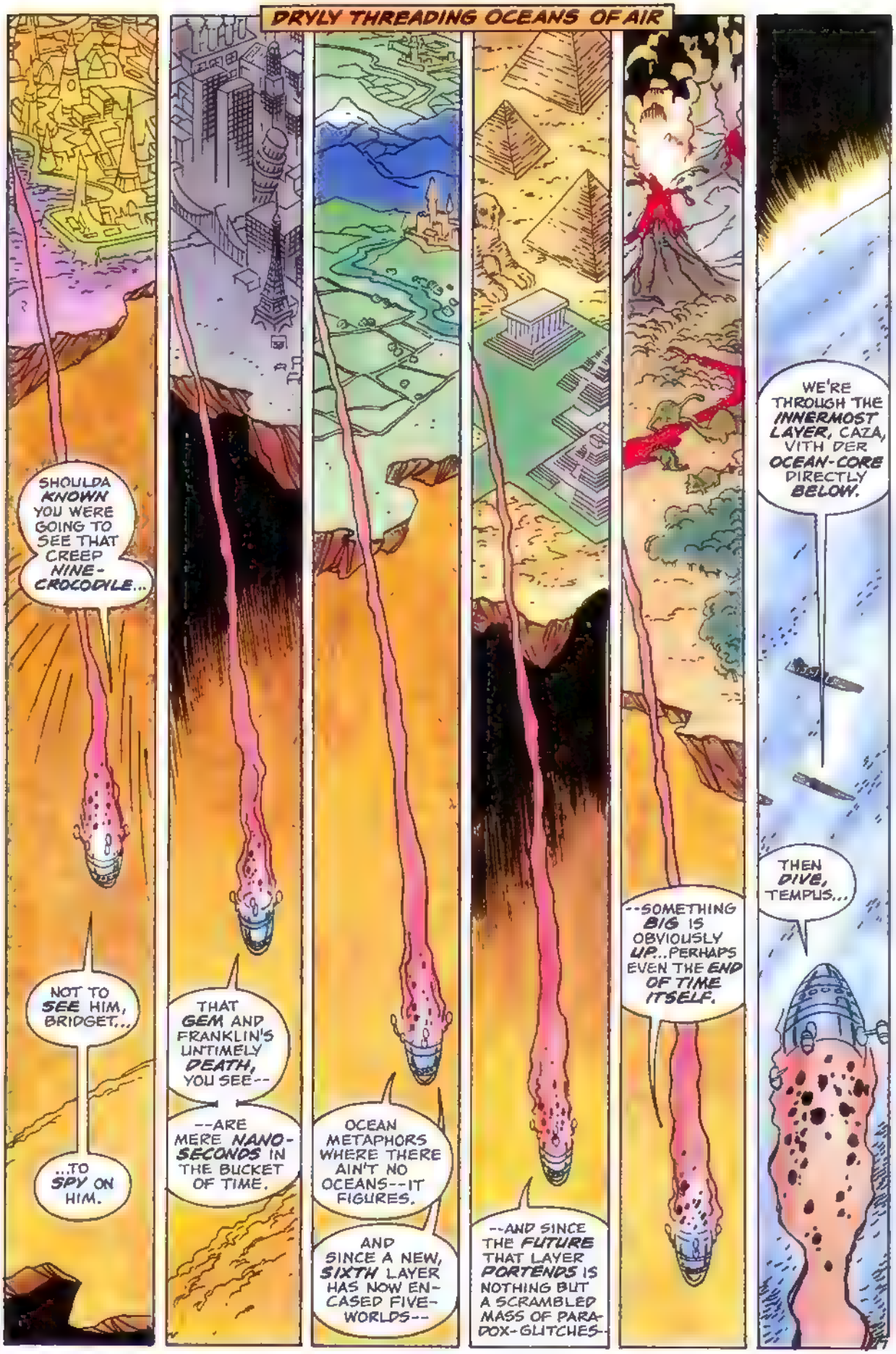

THAT WAS NO BELLE; THAT WAS A FILLY
NOBLY SAID, OLD CHAP!
VREEB
AND THE AZURE CROSSTIME EXPRESS PENETRATES THE GOLDEN MELD--THE VOIDISH NON-TIME AND NO-SPACE BETWEEN ALL TIMES AND BEYOND ALL SPACES...
...WHILE BRIDGET,..
OHO!
EL PETAT ACKIE WILSON
JOLENE DOLLY PARTON
YOU BABY TURTLES
SHOP AROUND MIRACLES
FIVE O'CLOCK WORLD VULTURES
TEK
...BOOGIES ALL THE WAY FROM THE ANACHRONY DEN--
HERE'S A GOLDEN OLDIE WAY AFTER MY TIME!
WELL, IT'S A FIVE O'CLOCK WORLD, WHEN THE WHISTLE BLOWS...
--STRAIGHT TO MY CLOCK COLLECTION.
IT'S ONLY THREE TO, BRIDGET, SO HOLD THE WHISTLING, HM?
GROUCH.
I'M TRYING TO-- EH? WHY ARE YOU DRESSED LIKE THAT?
I AM CLEOPATRA, ...AIN'T I?
I DON'T KNOW... ARE YOU?

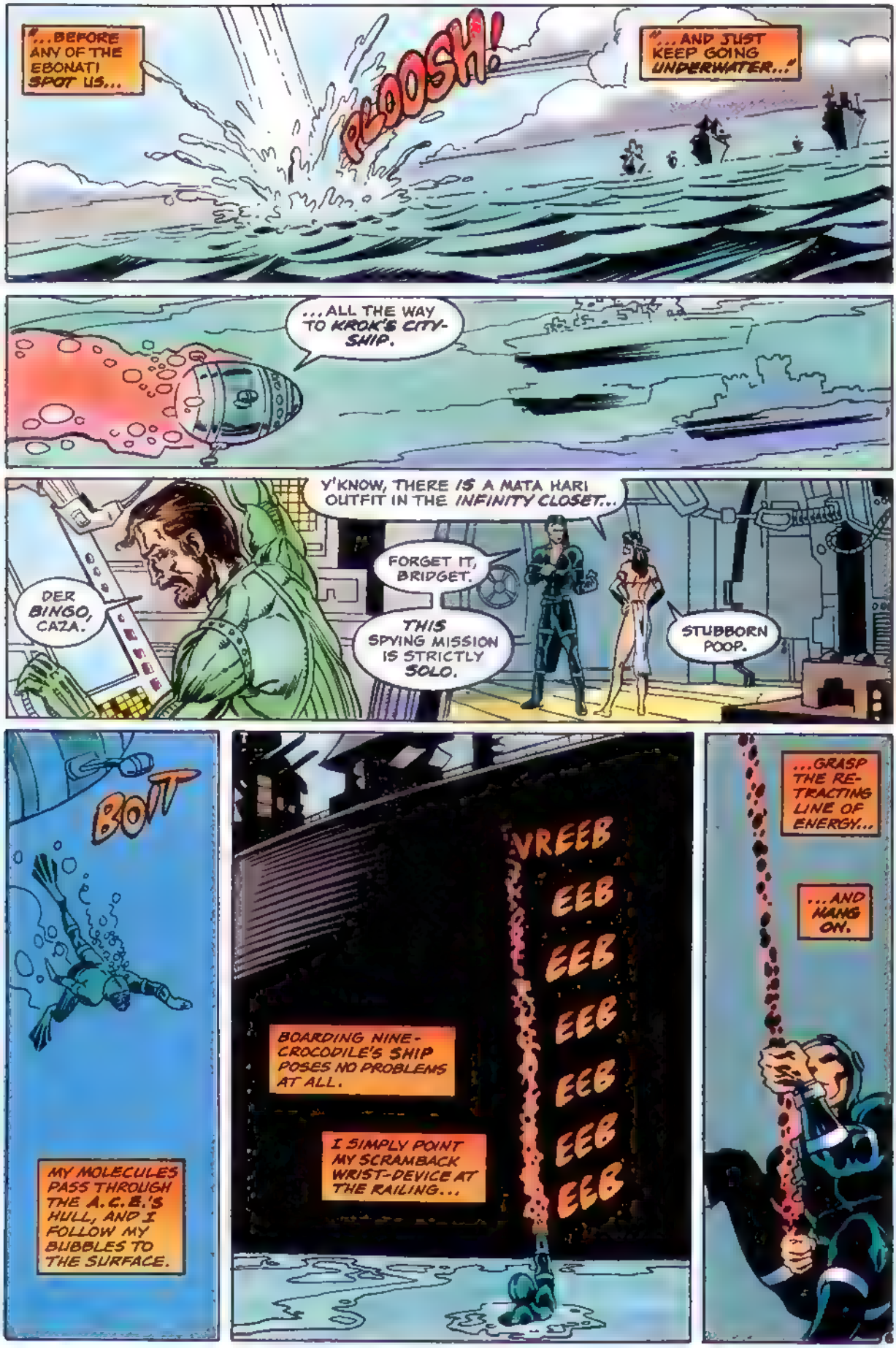
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, ACEY DEUCE? I THOUGHT WE GOT IT ALL SQUARED BACK IN TINSEL-TOWN, WHEN I STARRED IN--
SO DID I, BUT I'M BEGINNING TO WONDER NOW... AND MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE BEEN WONDERING THEN...
WHEN?
WHENEVER IT HAPPENED, IF IT DID.
WHENEVER WHAT HAPPENED?
I DON'T KNOW... BUT I'M BEGINNING TO WONDER.
THIS IS WHERE I CAME IN, AIN'T IT?
WHAT IF... THE DISTURBANCE IN OUR NATIVE TIMELINE WAS INITIATED A LONG TIME AGO... A LOT EARLIER THAN WE IMAGINED?
TIK TOK TIK TOK TIK TOK TIK TOK
MEANIN' THE REALITY WE'VE BEEN LIVIN' THROUGH MAY NOT BE THE REAL REALITY WE SHOULDA BEEN LIVIN' THROUGH?
POSSIBLY-- AT LEAST BEGINNING AT A CERTAIN UNKNOWN POINT.
DOES IT MATTER?
NOT IF YOU DON'T MIND NOT BEING CLEOPATRA.
HMMM...
OR BEING CLEOPATRA, AS THE CASE MAY BE.
REMEMBER THOSE STORIES I'M GOING TO WRITE UNDER ANOTHER NAME?
"TWICE UPON A TIME, IT TOOK TIME TO MAKE A HERO"--? YEAH, I REMEMBER-- AND IF YOU'RE GONNA WRITE YOUR AUTO-BIOGRAPHY UNDER A PSEUDONYM, IT MIGHT AS WELL BE IN A CONFUSING COMIC BOOK.
EXCEPT THOSE STORIES MAY BE ALL WRONG, AND--
ENOUGH! JUST TELL ME WHEN WE'RE GOING.
HEAD'S ALREADY GOT US UNDERWAY.
SHEESH, LIKE I CAN'T FEEL THE HUM OF THE MELD IN MY BONES...

I DIDN'T MEAN WHEN ARE WE LEAVING...
I MEANT... TO WHEN ARE WE HEADED?
OH.
ACTUALLY, WE'RE NOT GOING TO ANY TIME AT ALL.
WE'RE REMAINING OUT OF TIME, EN ROUTE TO THE EPICENTER OF LIMBO, THE CORE OF--
KTUNK
WHAT THE--?! I JUST SWALLOWED MY JUICY FRUIT!
EVENING: AND EVE AGAIN
KOO-KOO!
FIVE O'CLOCK, CAZA-- AND TROUBLE AHEAD!
WHAT KIND OF TROUBLE, TEMPUS?
I SUGGEST YOU COME TO THE CONTROL ROOM AND SEE THIS SHIT-STORM FOR YOURSELVES!
THEN IT'S THAT KIND OF TROUBLE...
COME ON!
"I WAS AFRAID OF SOMETHING LIKE THIS..."
KTUNK
FLOATING DOXIE-GLITCHES-- EVEN HERE! WHATEVER'S HAPPENING, IT'S INVADED THE GOLDEN MELD ITSELF!
I TAKE IT THAT'S NOT GOOD, HUH, ACEY-DEUCE?

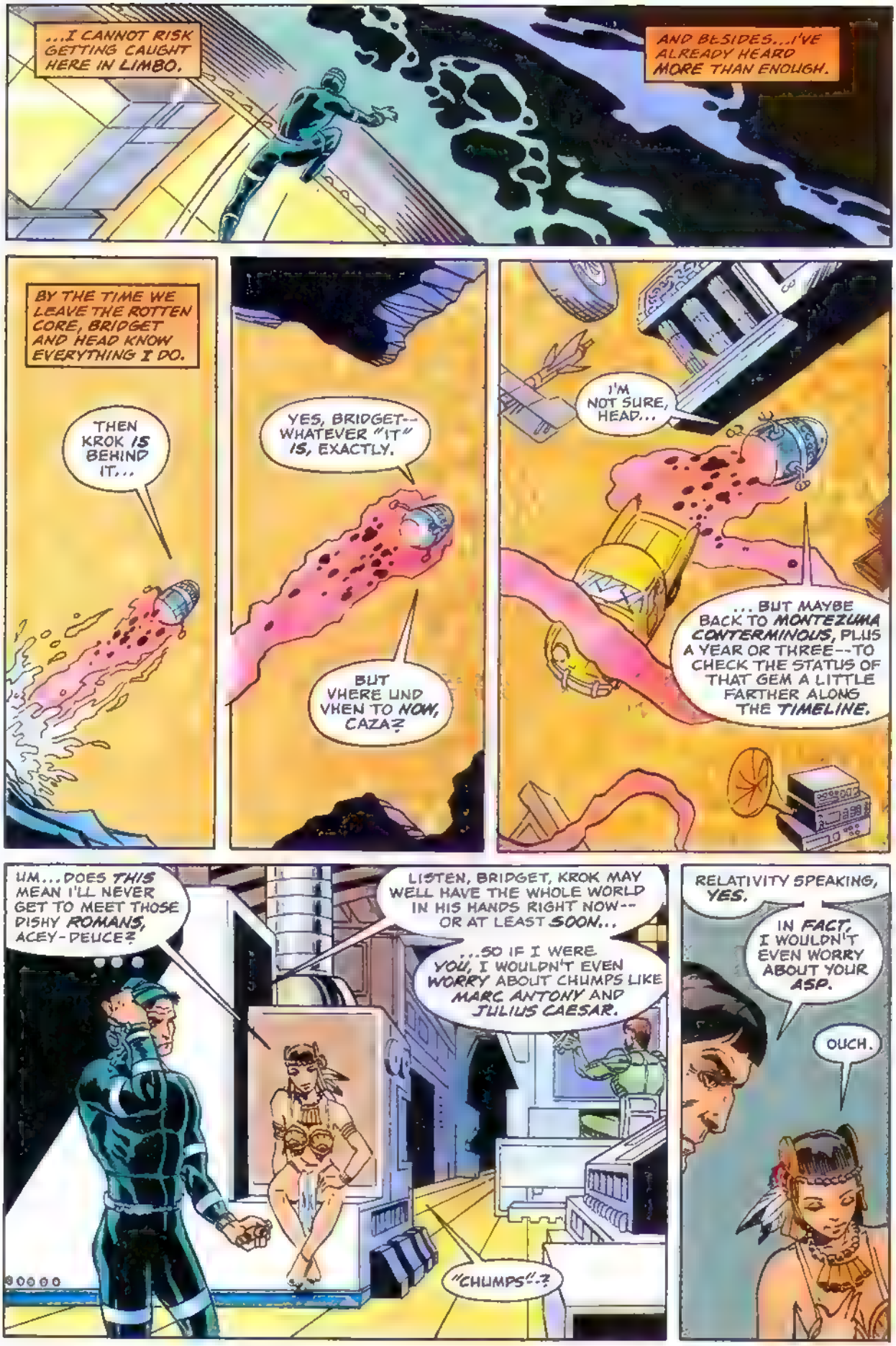

CANCEL THAT FIVE-WORLDS AND GIMME SIX-SPHERES
IT'S TERRIBLE, BRIDGET!
JUST LOOK AT THEM! EVERY ONE OF THOSE OBJECTS IS TIME-SCRAMBLED!
AND THE CLOSER WE APPROACH FIVE-WORLDS, CAZA, THE THICKER THE GLITCHES GET... ACCUMULATING UP AHEAD TO FORM A...
...MEIN GOTT-- A SPHERE-- WITH OUR DESTINATION COORDINATES LOCATED AT ITS PRECISE CENTER.
WEAVE THROUGH THE OBJECTS, HEAD! WE'VE GOT TO SEE IF FIVE-WORLDS IS STILL IN THERE--IF FIVE-WORLDS STILL EXISTS.
I'LL DO MY BEST, CAZA...
AND:
GOOD VREEBING, HEAD-- AND FIVE-WORLDS IS STILL INTACT! BUT NOW, WITH THE ADDITION OF THE SPHERICAL SHELL OF ICON-GLITCHES, IT'S BECOME... SIX-WORLDS!
YOU STILL HAVEN'T TOLD ME WHAT WE'RE DOING HERE, ACEY-DEUCE.
AS USUAL, BRIDGET, WE'RE DEVOTING OUR TIME TO MAKING THE PAST SAFE FROM THE FUTURE...IF IT ISN'T ALREADY TOO LATE.
I HADDA ASK?

THE FIVE LOOM AGAIN AS ONE, AND AS EVER: CONCENTRIC SPHERES, WORLDS WITHIN WORLDS, THE WHOLE A SYMBOLIC BLUEPRINT OF TIME, WITH EACH ONION-SKIN LAYER REPRESENTING A DIFFERENT EPOCH, AND ALL ANCHORED AROUND A CORE OF OCEAN WHICH IS THE WAY-STATION BETWEEN ALTERNATE TIMELINES...
DON'T YOU SEE, BRIDGET? IT'S ONLY FIVE-WORLDS TO ME, WITH THE FIFTH AND OUTER LAYER LIMITED TO MY INDIGENOUS TIME-- THE 23RD CENTURY!
YEAH...? SO?
TAKE US IN, HEAD-- ALL THE WAY TO THE CORE...
SO... EVERY EPOCH OR SO, IN CHRONOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL ACCOMMODATION, THE WHOLE THING ACCRETES A NEW OUTER LAYER, SO THAT VISITORS FROM THE FAR, FAR FUTURE WOULD PRESUMABLY ENCOUNTER TEN-WORLDS OR TWELVE-WORLDS OR EVEN TWENTY-THREE-WORLDS... IF TIME IS ALLOWED TO EXPAND THAT FAR...
LIKE I SAID-- YEAH? SO...?
HOO-BOY...


DRYLY THREADING OCEANS OF AIR
SHOULDA KNOWN YOU WERE GOING TO SEE THAT CREEP NINE-CROCODYLE...
NOT TO SEE HIM, BRIDGET...
...TO SPY ON HIM.
THAT GEM AND FRANKLIN'S UNTIMELY DEATH, YOU SEE--
--ARE MERE NANO-SECONDS IN THE BUCKET OF TIME.
OCEAN METAPHORS WHERE THERE AIN'T NO OCEANS--IT FIGURES.
AND SINCE A NEW, SIXTH LAYER HAS NOW ENCASED FIVE-WORLDS--
--AND SINCE THE FUTURE THAT LAYER PORTENDS IS NOTHING BUT A SCRAMBLED MASS OF PARADOX-GLITCHES--
--SOMETHING BIG IS OBVIOUSLY UP...PERHAPS EVEN THE END OF TIME ITSELF.
WE'RE THROUGH THE INNERMOST LAYER, CAZA, WITH DER OCEAN-CORE DIRECTLY BELOW.
THEN DIVE, TEMPUS...


"...BEFORE ANY OF THE EBONATI SPOT US...
SPLOOSH!
"...AND JUST KEEP GOING UNDERWATER..."
...ALL THE WAY TO KROK'S CITY-SHIP.
Y'KNOW, THERE IS A MATA HARI OUTFIT IN THE INFINITY CLOSET...
DER BINGO, CAZA.
FORGET IT, BRIDGET.
THIS SPYING MISSION IS STRICTLY SOLO.
STUBBORN POOP.
BOIT
MY MOLECULES PASS THROUGH THE A.C.E.'S HULL, AND I FOLLOW MY BUBBLES TO THE SURFACE.
VREEB
EEB
EEB
EEB
EEB
EEB
EEB
BOARDING NINE-CROCODILE'S SHIP POSES NO PROBLEMS AT ALL.
I SIMPLY POINT MY SCRAMBACK WRIST-DEVICE AT THE RAILING...
...GRASP THE RE-TRACTING LINE OF ENERGY...
...AND HANG ON.

BUT NOW...
...PASSING UNNOTICED THROUGH KROK'S CITY WILL BE FAR MORE DIFFICULT.
ONE HOUR AND THREE CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH EBONATI SHADOW-KNIGHT PATROLS LATER, I SCALE THE BACK WALL OF KROK'S HOME...
...HOPING HE HASN'T PAINTED THE SKYLIGHT OVER HIS INNER SANCTUM.
HE HASN'T -- AND IT IS STILL CLEAR...
--SATELLITE AND GEM ARE ALMOST COMPLETED, NINE-CROCOPILE, AND OUR ROVING SECURITY VOID-HOLES ARE IN PLACE.
THEN WE SHALL BE READY FOR THE SUN, SHADOW-KNIGHT, WITH TIME TO SPARE--AND DESTROY.
..EVEN IF THE MEANING OF THEIR WORDS IS ANYTHING BUT CLEAR.
LEFT TURN-- 23 SKIDOOO!
EH--?
ANOTHER PATROL.
AND WITH SO MANY KNIGHTS ABROAD--
HUP-TWO-THREE!
--IT IS CLEAR THAT KROK'S PLANNING A BIG DAY.
ROOFTOP SEARCH-- MARCH!
BUT MUCH AS I'D LIKE TO LEARN THE NATURE OF HIS PLANS...


...I CANNOT RISK GETTING CAUGHT HERE IN LIMBO.
AND BESIDES...I'VE ALREADY HEARD MORE THAN ENOUGH.
BY THE TIME WE LEAVE THE ROTTEN CORE, BRIDGET AND HEAD KNOW EVERYTHING I DO.
THEN KROK IS BEHIND IT...
YES, BRIDGET--WHATEVER "IT" IS, EXACTLY.
BUT VHERE UND VHEN TO NOW, CAZA?
I'M NOT SURE, HEAD...
...BUT MAYBE BACK TO MONTEZUMA CONTERMINOUS, PLUS A YEAR OR THREE--TO CHECK THE STATUS OF THAT GEM A LITTLE FARTHER ALONG THE TIMELINE.
UM...DOES THIS MEAN I'LL NEVER GET TO MEET THOSE DISHY ROMANS, ACEY-DEUCE?
LISTEN, BRIDGET, KROK MAY WELL HAVE THE WHOLE WORLD IN HIS HANDS RIGHT NOW--OR AT LEAST SOON...
...SO IF I WERE YOU, I WOULDN'T EVEN WORRY ABOUT CHUMPS LIKE MARC ANTONY AND JULIUS CAESAR.
"CHUMPS"...?
RELATIVITY SPEAKING, YES.
IN FACT, I WOULDN'T EVEN WORRY ABOUT YOUR ASP.
OUCH.

*To be continued in...**TOTAL ECLIPSE #3!***

Kingston, Youngstown, San Bernardino?

by Dean Mullaney

As soon as *Sabre* was released in late 1978, we started to receive phone calls from various creative people in the industry who were interested in having their own graphic albums published. The first to call was P. Craig Russell.

I had met Craig only a few times through Don McGregor, but because Craig lived in Youngstown, Ohio, I rarely had the chance to talk with him. That all changed once we agreed to go ahead with the new book Craig had conceived—*Night Music.*

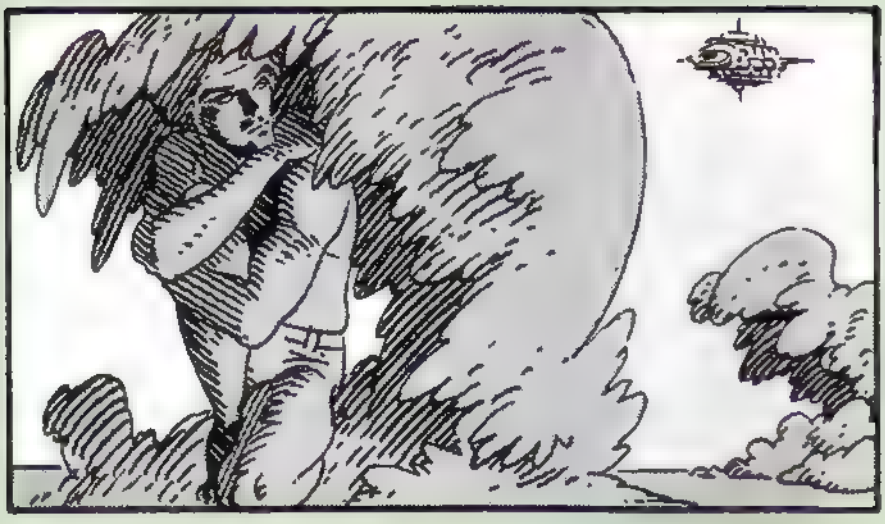
Craig's artistic style and approach was rapidly changing toward the end of his regular schedule on the *War of the Worlds* series with Don at Marvel. The *Dr. Strange* annual Craig plotted and drew was a true turning point both in his career and in the maturity of the medium. It was, and is, an exquisite piece of work.*

Night Music was to be the next phase in Craig's developing style, and an homage to those artists who influenced his earlier efforts.

Everyone familiar with Craig's oeuvre is aware that he creates new work on a relatively slow, but very consistent, basis. Actually, he's not really slow at all. In an industry where quantity is often valued more than quality, Craig was the first comics artist I met who understood how important his own pacing was to producing his finest work. When Craig and I sat down for our luncheon meeting at the wonderful (and now unfortunately no longer in business) Schraft's restaurant on 34th Street in New York, he told me that it would take him nine months to complete *Night Music.*

We wanted to publish another book in the meantime, and it turned out to be one completely out of left field. My long-time friend Richard Bruning (now Art Director at DC Comics) called one day in late 1978 to ask if I'd be interested in publishing a collection by a

* For a complete listing of Craig's works from this period, see the text page in the Eclipse color comic book *Night Music* #3, or send an S.A.S.E. to us for a photocopy.



friend of his who had an ongoing parody strip in Alan Light's *The Buyer's Guide for Comics Fandom*. Like Richard, I'd been a fan of Fred Hembeck's strip, *Dateline: @!!?#*, since its inception. Rich put me in touch with Fred, we hit it off, and what became the first in a long-running series of Fred Hembeck collections was published in January 1979.

Fred and his wife Lynn are marvelous people. I remember their wedding, which was held in the banquet room at this fabulous old hotel in downtown Kingston, New York, that should be a historical landmark if it isn't already. I drove nearly six hours from my apartment in Philadelphia to Kingston. For any of you who grew up in a small town, or now live in one, you'd love Kingston. It's one of those upstate New York towns nestled in the Catskills that still has a thriving center, surrounded by blocks and blocks of large, one family houses, spreading out until farmland takes over. A short drive away and you're in Woodstock.

That area of New York State now has a thriving comics community. If I recall, though, the only comics professionals living in the area then were Fred, Joe Staton, and Bob Haney. (Incidentally, if you ever come across a book called *Home-Made Houses in Woodstock*, or something like that, authored by Robert Haney, not only is it a good book, but it's by the same guy who wrote all those *Brave & Bold* stories for DC. And if you find two copies, pick one up for me and I'll pay you back—I lost my copy in a flood a couple of years ago.)

Fred prepared a color guide for the covers to *Hembeck, The Best of Dateline: @!!?#*, but that left us needing someone to do the actual color separations. My always intrepid buddy Mark Gruenwald suggested he and I do the separations ourselves! And we did. Mark and I spent countless hours sitting around an Upper West Side Manhattan apartment executing overlay after overlay of hand-cut color separations. It was an experience I later much appreciated once Eclipse entered color comics publishing on a large scale.

My brother Jan and I also wanted a permanent Eclipse logo and colophon, and we approached Tom Orzechowski because we wanted the best. Tom's Eclipse "moon and star" colophon made its first appearance on the cover of *Hembeck* and has received numerous accolades in the intervening years.

Tom was lettering *Night Music* at the time, being Craig's first and only choice for the job. Whether in New York then or San Francisco now, I've always enjoyed visiting Tom's studio. No trip to Tom's is complete without an envious look through his first-class collection of rare calligraphy books, a healthy discussion of trends in popular music, and a debate on why the letter "J" and the singular "I" are the only ones lettered as serifs in comics! And all the while, long-haired cats walking, prancing, jumping, and scurrying about and between your feet...

Both *Sabre* and *Hembeck* were profitable enough to allow Jan and me to begin two new productions. We turned to Don McGregor again for one, and to Steve Gerber for the other, and in each case, Tom provided the lettering and logo designs. Tom's title logo for Steve Gerber's *Stewart the Rat* remains my favorite of all the logos we've ever published.

Meanwhile, Craig was nearing completion of *Night Music* and, by its publication in November 1979, we had become good friends during his regular visits to New York. It was during one of these visits that Craig told me of a very interesting theory he has about comics criticism and what's lacking in it. He believes that there is a void in comics *art* critiques

because most of the people writing reviews are writers, and those better qualified to write art reviews (the artists) are too busy drawing! As a writer, it's a perspective I didn't see before Craig pointed it out, and ever since, I've taken his valid point of view into consideration.

I also learned more about Craig's art influences while watching a revival of Walt Disney's *Sleeping Beauty*. All the way across town to the giant Loew's theatre on Broadway, Craig was raving about the background paintings by Eyvind Earle. I hadn't seen *Sleeping Beauty* since I was perhaps eight years old, and mainly remembered the "realistic" Prince on horseback galloping through the forest to fight the dragon. (As an adult, I learned about rotoscoping, but as an eight-year-old, it sure looked good!) After sitting through all 75 minutes of *Sleeping Beauty*, particularly the gala scenes at the castle, I'll be damned if I couldn't see the remarkable similarities between Earle's renaissance-styled backgrounds and parts of Craig's work. Next time *Sleeping Beauty* plays near you, you can see for yourself.

Steve Gerber was very anxious to begin a new project after his recent problems with and departure from Marvel Comics. A few years earlier, Steve's *Howard the Duck* became a surprise hit for Marvel. When he continued to have contractual problems with the corporation, he vowed that if he were ever fired, he would create a comic book character named "Stanley the Rat." (Can you imagine the consternation this would have caused in certain quarters when someone would call: "Hey, Stan-lee, you rat!"?)

Steve's contractual problems continued and he left the company, but decided along the way to change Stanley's name to Stewart. It may not be as funny an in-joke, but it certainly scans better.

Steve first proposed a young animator he knew named Will Meugniot to illustrate the rat's adventures. Until that time, Will's only contribution to comics was a *Tigra* one-shot for Marvel. Animation deadlines and assignments prevented Will from doing more than character sketches, and it wasn't until he co-created *The DNAgents* with Mark Evanier a few years later that he finally got the time to enter the comics field. We then turned to Tom Sutton, a wonderful artist who happened at the time to keep a whole slew of rats in his house as pets! After drawing about ten pages, Tom wasn't able to continue with the project, and we were fortunate enough to get Gene Colan, who among about a million other things drew many of the *Howard* stories. With the addition of Tom Palmer, we ended up with one of the finest art teams in the history of comics.

I'll let the story of the fifteen alternate endings for *Stewart* wait until Steve writes his memoirs. Suffice it to say, because much of Steve's work is autobiographical to one degree or another, Stewart underwent as many changes as did Steve during this period! And no, for those inquiring minds, I don't mean to say that Steve is Stewart, or vice versa, just that there are those writers who draw from experiences, and those who make things up out of whole cloth. Steve is definitely one of those based on Planet Earth, even if it is a unique version of the planet. As we put the final touches on *Stewart*, I enjoyed watching Steve standing over cover-colorist Glynis Oliver Wein and manically blow-drying her watercolor.

One of the real highlights of working with Steve, Gene, and Tom on *Stewart* was a visit Steve and I made to Gene and Adrienne Colan's house. I've always considered Gene a master of mood and facial expressions and I was very curious to discover what was hanging on his walls. I wasn't disappointed. I stepped into the foyer and was treated to charcoal sketches of Paris as Gene saw it when he was in the armed services. As I wandered through the house, my

TM and © 1988 Steve Gerber

An unpublished Stewart the Rat *panel by Tom Sutton.*

eyes lit up over paintings, pastels, and drawings of neighborhood children, including Gene's own. This serene side of Gene Colan juxtaposed with his incredible interest in horror stories makes him one of the most fascinating people I've ever known. Incidentally, if you want to know where Gene dreamed up the diner from *Stewart the Rat*, take a ride down Route 9 in central New Jersey. I noticed the diner just before the cut-off for the house Gene was living in at the time.

Concurrent with *Stewart*'s production, Don McGregor and Marshall Rogers were hard at work on *Detectives, Inc.* Although *Detectives, Inc.* was started after *Stewart*, it was released first, in July 1980, because of changing art teams on the rat book.

Don McGregor created *Detectives, Inc.* in the late 1960s, and that amateur comic he and his friend Alex Simmons wrote and drew was what first brought Don to the attention of Jim Warren, publisher of *Creepy*, *Eerie*, and *Vampirella*, and started Don on his professional comics career.

As with all of his books, Don did an incredible amount of research on *Detectives, Inc.* He travelled all over New York looking for locations, talking to private investigators, midwives...anyone who could be of help with regards to his plot involving murder, midwives, and Manhattan.

Don, Jan, and I were very fortunate to interest Marshall Rogers in the story. At the time, Marshall was the bright new star on the comics horizon, having completed a critically acclaimed run of Batman stories with Steve Englehart in *Detective Comics*. I always thought it an odd coincidence that Marshall went from detective to detective. Marshall's sense of research and obligation to the story was equal to Don's. In fact, Marshall was so dedicated that he often quipped that he had gotten so "into" the story he thought he *was* Don half the time.

Marshall's apartment building had a beautiful view of the George Washington Bridge and the Palisades in uptown Manhattan, and I went to talk over the book with him on many, many nights. One evening I got sidetracked, though. Driving up Broadway in Harlem, I noticed a large crowd waiting by the entrance of a rarely-used theatre. I looked up at the marquee which boasted "Reverend Ike Tonight," and I jerked my car on to a side street, jumped out, paid my money, and went in. It turned out to be one of the most outrageously entertaining experiences I've ever had. I'd seen Reverend Ike on TV before, but he was just sensational in person. I never liked Jimmy Lee Swaggart, or Billy Graham, or any of those other guys. But Reverend Ike was different. I mean, any "preacher" who says "God wants me to have a Cadillac, so pass the hat, brother," at least has an incredible sense of humor. I didn't put any money in the hat, but the couple of bucks price at the door certainly provided as much entertainment as *Sleeping Beauty* downtown, if not more!

I eventually made it to Marshall's that evening, we had our *Detectives, Inc.* conference, and not long thereafter, the book was completed. We planned to premiere *Detectives, Inc.* at the July 4th Chicago Comics Convention. In order to accommodate Don and Marsha McGregor, many boxes of freshly printed *Detectives, Inc.* graphic novels, and two friends of mine, I rented a bigger car and we set out for the Great Middle West. I know what happened to us, but I wonder what ever happened to Reverend Ike. Maybe he got enough donations to buy himself an island in the Caribbean!

Next issue: Will Don and I and a carload of Detectives, Inc. *make the 1,000 mile trip in time for the Chicago Con? Or will* Detectives, Inc.*'s premiere start without us?!*

WHO'S WHO
IN TOTAL ECLIPSE

Tachyon Transferred to our universe by the Corporation, this super-powered alien found acceptance in the New Wave.

Always in it for the money, Nicholas Walcek robbed banks using his power to negate friction, until he was remanded to The Liberty Project. **Slick**

Avalon A high school student, Elizabeth Lane is the reluctant heir to druidic powers. Her father, Professor Holmes, brought Tachyon to Earth.

Rosalita Vasquez has the strength of a mule and the temper to match. The Project was the perfect place for her. **Cimarron**

Dot A sometime freelance government operative, this industrial spy helped rescue the New Wave and Professsor Holmes from the Corporation.

Repentent criminal Lee Clayton's scientific genius and perfect aim make him a valued Project member. **Crackshot**

Polestar A circus acrobat, Morgan accidentally become embroiled in Dot's spying activities and joined the New Wave.

Beatrice Keogh's ability to control heat and flame made her a nasty problem in school— and a prime Liberty Project candidate. **Burnout**

Impulse Daniel Barkin kept his telekinetic abilities a secret until he joined the New Wave with his girlfriend Avalon.

No one in the New Wave knows that the Corporation transforms unwanted handicapped people into robots. **Megabyte**

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Nightmares

They haunt the uneasy sleep of the immortal Zzed, feeding him the doomsday plan that will put an end to his life...and the universe. In his dreams, Zzed learns of hidden laboratories, ancient Aztec gems, and alien beings of enormous power.

From his dreaded limbo, the being known as Misery watches with growing concern as Zzed's plans take shape. To save himself, Misery must call upon the help of his most hated enemies—the Airfighters.

The battle is begun.

But the heroes and heroines of Earth face a threat far more powerful than they yet realize. Zzed may be the master of his dreams, or merely a pawn in a far larger game of destruction. With each passing moment, his nightmares come closer to fruition. And billions of lives hang in the balance.

Total Eclipse

It's Eclipse Comics' Tenth Anniversary. In this and future issues, you'll encounter Airboy, Valkyrie, Skywolf, Miracleman, The Prowler, Strike, the Heap, Aztec Ace and virtually every star from Eclipse's first decade of innovative comics publishing.

Marv Wolfman, writer, is the author of *The New Teen Titans, Crisis on Infinite Earths, Tomb of Dracula,* and countless other acclaimed comic books. The Zzed saga is his most intricate plot to date.

Bo Hampton, pencil artist, is well-known for his detailed linework and powerful layouts in books such as *Airboy, Lost Planet, Luger,* and *The New Mutants. Total Eclipse* is a new peak in his artistic development.

Will Blyberg, ink artist, has used his eye for texture, shadow, and depth on *Valkyrie!, Airboy, DNAgents,* and others. His flawless execution breathes added life into this epic adventure.

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